

Hollander and the Rockstar

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Hollander and the Rockstar

by [zwischenimmerundnie](#)

Summary

It was supposed to be just another night out with his friends. Music, a couple drinks and some conversation, but when Shane reunites with someone from his past, feelings are brought back to the surface and he will have to decide whether or not to confront them.

Notes

Here I am again.... I was editing this one while posting the other two one shots, but it's here now and ready for the world to see. Hope you guys enjoy it, kudos and comments are always welcomed

Ps: all songs in this fic exist, but you know, let's pretend they're all Ilya's 😊

Chapter 1: The Reunion

It was the first three chords that got his attention and that was saying a lot considering he wasn't someone who paid much attention to music on a general basis. Sure, he liked what he liked, usually bands from the early 2000's which he grew up listening to, but normally whatever was on the radio was just white noise, as good a companion on his work route as anything else. But that song in particular was different, it reminded him of something, it evoked some kind of emotion he couldn't even describe.

It was such an odd feeling that he barely noticed his hand gripping tighter on the steering wheel, while his free hand reached to crank up the sound a notch. That's when the voice filled up the air and the familiarity of it all only seemed to increase, causing a strange feeling in the pit of his stomach. He couldn't understand the words, the language not quite clear to him, but still, he could've sworn that he had heard it all before.

By the time he parked the car, the song was almost done, the familiar riffs from the beginning coming back to close the whole thing off in a grand finale. He frowned, eyes blinking at the screen where nothing but the name of the radio was displayed. He felt odd, slightly out of himself and desperate to understand what-

"Hollander!"

"Jesus Christ," his grip on the steering wheel was almost painful as the voice caused his whole body to shriek, a rush of adrenaline washing over him. "What the fuck?"

"Sorry," Hayden's lips turned into an apologetic smile. "Didn't mean to scare you, buddy, but you're being summoned by the boss."

"I just got here," he said matter of factly as Hayden shrugged.

"Man said to get Shane Hollander to his office the minute he arrived. Probably wants to make sure the players are all good for tomorrow's game."

Shane, who had been collecting his belongings while Hayden spoke, got out of the car with a sigh. The song was still replaying itself in his head and he just knew he wouldn't be able to think of anything else -not thoroughly at least- until he figured out who it belonged to and why it felt familiar to him.

"You're spacing out again, buddy."

"Fuck off, Hayden."

"Okay, bad day for Shane Hollander, got it."

“It's not that, I'm just-” he sighed and quickly shook his head. “Sorry, I just have a lot in my mind.”

“Anything I can help with?”

“Don't think so,” he said as he followed Hayden inside the building, the gigantic logo of the Montreal Voyageurs painted on the wall across from him. Shane had been the head of the Voyageurs physical therapy clinic for the past year after almost two years working as an assistant and one as a trainee. He loved his job, it was what he had always dreamt of doing and he surely did not take anything for granted, even if sometimes he felt like screaming. Some players could be incredibly stubborn and the coaches were not far off either.

He stopped by his clinic, dropping off his belongings before he headed towards the main office, Hayden still following him like a little lost puppy. They had known each other since university, had similar degrees and managed to both get a job at the same place, which was good because Shane could have someone he relied on by his side when things got too much.

“...and this is where I leave you,” Hayden said all of a sudden and Shane cocked an eyebrow in confusion. “He asked for you only.”

“And you came all the way here for...?”

“Seemed like you needed the support,” he shrugged, which brought out a small but honest laugh from Shane. “I'll be back at the office if you need me, Doctor Hollander.”

Shane rolled his eyes, watched his friend walk away and then knocked gently on the door. Once inside, he did the usual routine, shook hands with the coach and the general manager, let them in on all the players' updates, shared his concerns about any injuries and eventually cleared out who could be playing in the next match. Nothing unusual, nothing to leave him too worried about, nothing difficult enough to keep his mind away from the annoying sensation that song had left.

Back to his office, Shane rearranged his desk, turned on his computer and started to go through his step by step plan for the day. It was Friday and without a game that day, things were to be pretty calm, but he still had players to check on, exercises to apply and one very long medical result to go through that could be extremely important for one of the player's career and the team's season. Before he could start any work though, his phone started to vibrate on the table and he quickly reached for it.

*<rose> clear ur schedule
i got us three tickets for a concert tonight
and I'm not taking no for an answer*

<shane> what concert? where?

*<rose> rock concert at the arena
u will like it*

*<shane> doubt it
but fine
i will go*

*<rose> that was easy 🙄
tell hayden
i will pick you up at seven*

Shane set the phone down and looked back to the screen of his computer. He considered searching about the song he had heard earlier, he knew there were apps that could help him figure that out, or even maybe try to dig for it through the radio's social media, but quickly pushed that thought back. He had work to do and that should be what he focused on.



“How did you get tickets for this show anyway?” asked Shane, who was sitting on the passenger’s seat of Rose's car, phone in hand as he scrolled through his very dull -and almost never updated- Instagram. He has lost count of how many times Rose had bugged him about being more active, posting more even if it was about his job, but it simply wasn't something Shane felt like doing. Privacy was important to him.

“A friend that used to work for the magazine is working on the production of the show and had some extra tickets.”

As Rose turned a corner, the arena appeared in the distance and a crowd materialized itself in front of them. Women and men, most dressed in black and all incredibly stylish, gathered in the street, some were singing, some were just talking, and most of them carried posters and albums. Shane felt even more out of place as he scanned the crowd; those people were passionate fans and he didn't even know the name of the band they were seeing

Once Rose managed to park the car, the three of them quickly got out, heading to one of the back doors, where a security guard stood. Apparently Rose's friend had done more than just hook her up with tickets, because the second she told her name to the man, they were granted early access to the arena and escorted to a VIP section right at the front of the stage.

It was nice, the chairs were comfortable and the bar had a surprisingly vast list of drinks. Rose and Hayden each grabbed a gin and tonic, while Shane resorted to his usual ginger ale before they took their seats. They talked through the music that played on the speakers, watched as the roadies prepared the stage and watched as the main doors opened to a screaming hoard of eager fans.

Shane kind of envied their excitement. He had his favorite musicians, he had actors that he liked to watch the movies more than others, but he couldn't remember a time that he was ever a fan of something so passionately. Well, at least nothing that wasn't related to hockey, because then he knew the stats, he knew all the important names and dates. Hockey was his one true passion.

As one of the girls behind them gasped at something she saw on stage, Shane quickly turned his gaze in the same direction, watching in complete silence as a seven feet high poster suddenly took over the back of the stage. The man on the poster had curly dirty blond hair, his blue eyes were sharp and intense, he had a mole on his left cheek and wore an all black outfit, the shirt with its sleeves cut off to show his toned and tanned arms as he held a guitar.

Shane didn't speak, he barely blinked as he stared at the poster and felt his whole body react. He mumbled something to himself as realization hit him, the image in front of him bringing back memories he did not expect.

"God, these people really love him," Hayden said as the cheers got louder.

"Apparently he's very good and people are saying he'll be the next big deal," Rose shouted through the music and the screaming crowd. "He's playing on every radio and social media loves him."

"Wonder why," Hayden chuckled as he nodded towards the crowd. "Shane? Are you alright?"

Shane allowed himself to look at his friend and only then realized that he had been hearing them, but had not engaged in conversation for a while. He forced a smile and nodded his head, even if his heart was thumping inside his chest.

"I'll go grab something a bit stronger," he said, earning a confused look from both his friends. "Might as well enjoy the night, right?"

He left before they could say anything and quickly made his way to the bar, ordering himself a beer. He wondered if it was too late to leave, but knew that if he did that, Hayden and Rose would never let him hear the end of it. So he grabbed his beer, took a few long sips of it and tried his best to look normal as he made his way back to his friends.

And then, just as he reached them, the lights went out and the same riff from that morning started playing. Through the screaming crowd, Shane repeated every note in his head and suddenly it all made sense. Suddenly he could hear those same riffs coming out of an old guitar, echoing through his childhood bedroom as he sat on the floor. Suddenly Shane was sixteen again and he could hear the voice perfectly clear.

I wrote a song and I want you to hear it, da?

C'mon, Hollander, tell me what you think?

I'm gonna be a rockstar one day.

Shane blinked a couple of times, then forced his gaze up just in time to see the face he had not seen in years appear right in front of him.

*"...but sometimes I feel
That we could be
The best for both of us..."*

The crowd sang along, they screamed, danced and jumped. On either side of Shane, Rose and Hayden nodded along to the rhythm of the drum, but Shane could do nothing but stand still, staring at those eyes that had once been a constant in his life.

*"...if not now
Maybe later, I don't care
For you
I can wait..."*

As the chorus came along, the man dropped the guitar and took the microphone with him as he moved around. He had the same energy, the same confidence and the same fire. He had the crowd wrapped around his finger, following every command, singing along to every word and shouting praise.

*"...and if in the next second
everything ends, then I
I won't be able to escape..."*

As the bridge of the song came along, Shane was already feeling overwhelmed and in his brain there were two voices fighting to be heard. One wanted to get the hell out of there, the other was feeding him all those memories that he simply couldn't push back. Not anymore, not when the man kneeled down on the edge of the stage and found him in the crowd, their eyes locked for a good minute. Shane's whole body was suddenly covered in shivers and for one brief second his mind went completely blank. It was the wink that he directed at him, paired with that crooked smile he had once been so used to, that broke the spell.

Holy fucking shit, Ilya Rozanov was standing in front of him again. After years of silence, Ilya was on a stage in Montreal, performing for a crowd of 5 thousand people and he, Shane Hollander, happened to be one of them.

"Umm, Shane," Hayden's voice was filled with confusion. "Did he just point at you?"

"Shane?"



Shane should've said no.

The moment the security guard approached them to say they had been invited backstage he should have declined politely, turned on his heels and headed out of the arena. Hayden and Rose would have a thousand different questions about why he did it, but he could deal with that, he would be answering questions either way. Instead, the second he saw the excitement in their eyes, Shane agreed to it and in a matter of seconds they were being led down a large and bright corridor, not much different from the ones he walked through every single day at the Voyagers.

The difference was that he never felt nauseous whenever he walked those corridors, there he was at home. Here, surrounded by posters of artists that had previously played in the arena, Shane felt his stomach curl up with each step he took, the unsureness of what was about to happen sending his anxiety through the roof. It had been years since he last saw Ilya and throughout all those years they had not shared a single word nor a text. So it was a bit hard for Shane to even fathom that he was about to be face to face with his childhood friend again, a friend who had simply disappeared one day without an explanation or a goodbye.

Oh dear, I'm sorry, but Ilya is gone.

...Ilya is gone...

Those words had repeated themselves in his brain over and over again for months, only going away when Shane forced himself to forget Ilya and everything that involved him. But as he walked down that corridor, he could almost hear the soft cadence of Ilya's aunt's voice, the sadness in which she said those words to a Shane that was so eager to finally open up. That day was supposed to change everything for them, it was supposed to be the best day of his life, but all he was left with was pain and resentment. Resentment which was starting to build up again.

“... I just can't believe you, out of all people, knows a rockstar,” Rose's voice brought Shane back to reality and as they came to a stop in front of the door, Shane felt his heart pounding so hard he thought it was about to come out through his mouth. “Are you even gonna tell us exactly how do you-”

The door swung open and Shane's stomach dropped, because in front of him, standing in all his half naked glory, was Ilya Rozanov. His blue eyes still had that same glow to them, the curls -messy after a show of almost two hours- were clinging to his sweaty forehead and his beaming smile was still as earth shattering to Shane as it was when they were only teenagers.

“Shane fucking Hollander,” Ilya's voice had changed very little, it was obviously more mature, but it still had the same cadence as before, the same roughness that he somehow still made it feel soothing. It was a very Ilya thing and Shane realized he had missed it. He hated that he did, but that was the truth. “I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw you in the crowd, Hollander.”

“Trust me, I'm just as surprised as you.”

“I bet,” he smirked, then opened the door wider. “Come in, please.”

Shane followed Hayden and Rose inside, holding on a breath as he walked past Ilya. He could not let himself be fooled by his charm or his playfulness, he had to remind himself the man that was standing right there beside him was the same kid that walked away from him without a word. Shane wouldn't allow for him to just brush everything off so easily.

“I really don't have much time, but it's nice to have you here,” Ilya gestured towards the couch and in seconds Rose and Hayden had already made themselves comfortable. “Can I get you guys anything to drink? I have water, some energy drinks and vodka. Good vodka, the Russian kind.”

“We'll take the vodka,” Rose answered quickly and Hayden nodded, all while Shane stood by the couch, his eyes rummaging through the entire room.

The place was pretty standard, white brick walls, a wardrobe, a mini fridge and a dresser where some makeup and hair products were scattered around along with an open can of energy drink and a pack of cigarettes. It seemed like he had yet to quit that awful habit of his, one which Shane saw as it bloomed at the tender age of fifteen.

“Hollander?” he turned back at Ilya, who was holding a can of ginger ale on his hand and frowned, his eyes lingering in the can for a while before he looked up at Ilya. “Still your favorite?”

“Why do you even have this?”

“Someone once told me it can be good for when your stomach is kind of fuzzy,” he shrugged. “So I always make sure there's at least one wherever I go.”

“Right,” Shane declined the ginger ale though and sat down beside his friends, each one of them with a glass in hand.

“I can't believe you are here,” Ilya flipped the chair by the dresser and sat down, his eyes barely leaving Shane the entire time. To him it was as if Rose and Hayden were not even there. “It's been so long and-”

“Seven years.”

“Fuck, that long, huh?” he nodded, his smile never leaving his lips, even if Shane could've sworn he saw a hint of sadness in his eyes.

No, don't do this, he told himself over and over again. *Have some dignity, keep yourself together and do not let him wrap you around his finger.*

“How do you guys know each other anyway?” Hayden asked and Ilya finally looked away from Shane.

“Hollander and I were childhood friends,” he said, which prompted both Hayden and Rose to look at Shane with wide eyes. Ilya chuckled at that, sipped his vodka and set the glass down on the table closer to the couch. “I'm guessing he hasn't told you guys about me?”

“We had no idea you two knew each other until the concert started.”

“He didn't even mention the fact he already knew you as an artist.”

“I didn't,” Shane explained, once again attracting Ilya's attention. “I didn't even know it was your concert. I didn't know you were back in Montreal at all.”

“So you guys haven't even talked for the past seven years?” Rose arched an eyebrow, her eyes going from Shane to Ilya then back to Shane, who nodded. “Well, that's one big coincidence, huh?”

“You tell me about it,” Shane mumbled and he almost regretted not having a glass of vodka of his own at that moment. He could really use a drink.

“What have you been doing, Hollander?”

“I work at the Montreal Voyagers, as the head of the physical therapy clinic.”

“Like you always dreamt of,” he smiled, then turned to Rose and Hayden. “You guys work with him?”

“Hayden does,” Rose quickly replied. “I work at a magazine, I write for the fashion segment.”

“Oh, that's very interesting,” he smiled and Shane could tell Rose was completely enamored by him, which in all fairness was something he had gotten used to over the years he knew Ilya. He was like a flame, attracting the moth wherever he went. “I have tons of interviews to do next week, maybe one of them is for your magazine?”

“Sadly, I don't think so, but I'm willing to talk to my boss if you want to change that,” she grinned. “I know she would be thrilled to do it.”

“Maybe we'll do that.”

Shane sighed. He wanted to scream, to grab Ilya by the throat and ask him how he could be so nonchalant after seven years of silence. How could he sit there, talk to his friends, talk to *him* as if he wasn't the one who walked away without a word. Did everything they went through not mean shit to him? Was that the reason why it was so easy for him to just ignore the past and pretend nothing that happened?

“...but I was new at the school and Hollander was the only kid that even bothered to talk to me on my first day,” Shane snapped out of his thoughts to realize Ilya was still talking, but not only that, he was talking about them, about their friendship. “After that I kind of just followed him around and I don't think he liked me that much at the beginning, but I grew on him, *da?*”

That last word was directed solely at Shane, who couldn't do much but nod.

“I guess you could say so.”

“So you were an exchange student?” Hayden asked.

“Oh no, I moved here to-”

The door opened and they all turned their attention to the woman that stood there, her greenish eyes surveying the room until they landed on Shane, who she eyed up and down. Shane had never been introduced to her properly, but he knew exactly who she was. Svetlana Vetrova, a Russian friend of Ilya who used to live in Boston while they were teens, and who seemingly had remained by his side throughout all this time.

“Sorry to interrupt, but you have some interviews to do before we can leave.”

“Right,” Ilya pulled himself up, then turned to Hayden and Rose, that beaming smile back to his face. “You guys want a photo?”

“Oh my God, yes, please.”

“Sveta, can you-”

“I'm on it,” she took Rose's phone in her hands and Shane watched from the couch as his friends posed along Ilya for a couple of photos.

Once they were all done, Svetlana left the room uttering a string of Russian words that Shane couldn't understand, but that made Ilya smirk. He rolled his eyes, then turned back to his friends, who were looking at the photos with such giddy eyes that he almost felt bad for being in such a mood. It was hard not to be though and they would understand once they knew the whole story.

“It was a pleasure to meet you guys,” Ilya smiled, handing each of them a guitar pick with his name on it. “I got two more shows here in Montreal, I'll talk to Svetlana and she will add your names to the list.”

“That's awesome, dude, thanks.”

“No problem, any friend of Hollander is also my friend.”

Shane rolled his eyes, then followed his friends towards the door, but stopped before he could even walk past the threshold as he felt Ilya's hand on his elbow, keeping him in place. He gulped, but turned around either way, arching an eyebrow in question.

Ilya held up a small business card, which he handed it to Shane. “This is the hotel I'm staying at. I'll be here for a week, maybe you'd like to show up, have a couple drinks and talk.”

Talk. They really did have a lot to talk about, the main thing being why did he think it was okay to leave that way. But there was a part of Shane that wanted to take that card, rip it into pieces and shove it on Ilya's face for even daring to act like what he had done wasn't serious, to act like he had not hurt him.

Instead, he took the card with him and walked away, not even bothering to say anything.



Shane had good friends and he was extremely happy for that. Despite the obvious awkwardness they had witnessed, neither Rose nor Hayden asked any questions as they drove back to Shane's house. They talked about the concert obviously, made sure to share with one another which songs they liked more, how cool Ilya looked on the stage and even how good the vodka was, which knowing Ilya like Shane did, would make him extremely proud.

But they didn't ask the obvious question, the one thing they had been dying to ask.

So as he walked back from the front door with their food, Shane prepared himself to just let it all out. He had debated whether or not he should tell them, if it was even worth it to bring back all those emotions, after all it had taken him nearly a whole year to fully get over what had happened and if he was being honest with himself, despite getting over it, he never truly forgot the pain Ilya caused him.

But then, the rational side of him pondered that maybe, just maybe, it would be good to finally talk about it with someone. Even if his parents had helped him get through it back in the day, maybe sharing with his friends was the one thing he needed to finally let go and let the whole thing in the past. Even if the past had just reappeared in the form of a very sexy, talented rockstar.

He set the food down on the coffee table and sat beside Hayden on the floor, watching as his friends quietly divided everything. He took a bite of his burger, a little indulgence he preserved for the weekends, and leaned back against the couch. A part of Shane wanted to see how long his friends would manage to avoid the subject, but he also just wanted to rip off the band-aid.

It was a seven year long band-aid, he was growing tired of it anyway.

“So, should I tell you now or wait until you finally burst out and ask me?”

Rose arched an eyebrow, her eyes going from Shane to Hayden, then back to Shane. “We didn't think you'd want to talk.”

“Yeah, I mean, as polite as you were, because you always are, it was pretty clear you didn't want to be there.”

“Which I'm sorry, by the way,” Rose smiled apologetically. “I kind of feel like tonight was all my fault.”

“You couldn't possibly know that Ilya and I knew each other, Rose,” he assured her.

“Still, I feel kind of bad,” she shrugged. “So, if you don't want to talk, I totally get it.”

“Me too, man,” Hayden quickly said. “I'll be curious as hell, but I'll get it.”

“Hayden!”

“What? I'm being honest here.”

“It's okay,” Shane sighed and took a sip of his ginger ale. He adjusted himself on the floor, a cushion suddenly pressed against his chest. He could use the comfort of it, he supposed. “I met Ilya when we were fourteen. He lost his mother when he was twelve and that caused him to get into some trouble back in Russia, so his family thought it would be better to send him over here to live with his aunt.”

Rose and Hayden remained in silence, simply watching Shane as he talked.

“I saw him alone on his first day at school and since I had also been the new guy a couple years prior, I decided that I would go over and talk to him. He seemed shy at first, but it didn't take long for him to be babbling non-stop. We had pretty different personalities, but we got along well, we could talk about a lot of things and we both loved hockey. It was nice to have a friend, someone I could actually be myself around, so we became inseparable and....”

Chapter 2: Teenagers Pt1

“I saw him alone on his first day at school and since I had also been the new guy a couple years prior, I decided that I would go over and talk to him. He seemed shy at first, but it didn't take long for him to be babbling non-stop. We had pretty different personalities, but we got along well, we could talk about a lot of things and we both loved hockey. It was nice to have a friend, someone I could actually be myself around, so we became inseparable and....”

*9 Years Ago
16 years old*

Shane had been staring at his laptop for far too long when he heard the well-known voice fill out the house, causing a smile to form in the corner of his lips. He was up and opening the door only seconds later, arms crossed as he watched Ilya -with his usual baggy jeans, worn out shirt and guitar- make his way down the hallway.

“Your dad is making his famous chicken parm, so I am staying for dinner,” he stated as he made it inside the bedroom, kicking his shoes to the side before he threw himself on the bed with a loud huff.

“When are you not staying for dinner?” Shane pondered, closing the door behind him. “You eat here more often than at your own house.”

“My aunt's house.”

“Two years and you still have a hard time calling it your house?” Shane cocked an eyebrow as he laid beside Ilya on the bed, their feet instantly engaging in what could only be called a foot wrestle.

“Because it is not my house,” he shrugged, a breathy laugh escaping him as he tried to pin Shane's right foot down. “I love my aunt, I am very grateful for what she's done for me, but I don't always feel comfortable there and you know it, Hollander.”

“You never say why though.”

Ilya sighed and Shane knew he was seconds away from deflecting the whole conversation. He had a habit of doing so when things got too intense for his liking.

“And you don't have to, but you should know by now that you can trust me.”

“I do trust you, Hollander. You are only person I do trust completely,” he said with a gentle nudge, earning a smile from Shane. “But I don't have a big reason for it, it's just a feeling.”

“Just a feeling,” Shane repeated under his breath.

“I am a boy of big feelings, Hollander.”

Shane laughed. It was always easy for him to laugh when he was around Ilya.

“That you are.”

“Talking about feelings,” Ilya's eyes suddenly lit up and Shane furrowed his eyebrows, watching as he sat on his knees on the bed and reached for the guitar he had placed by the bed. “I wrote a song and I want you to hear it, *da?*”

Shane gave him a quick nod, adjusted himself on the bed and watched as Ilya strummed the strings of his guitar, one chord after another. The pace of the music was quick, the usual mellow rock Ilya leaned into and while Shane wasn't exactly the biggest rock fan he enjoyed when it came from Ilya.

*“...but sometimes I feel
That we could be
The best for both of us...”*

Shane bit his lip, there was a vulnerability in Ilya's eyes that he only saw when he was playing. Each word was sung with so much passion, so much truth, sometimes Shane felt weird even standing there along with him. It often felt so private he couldn't help but feel like an intruder.

*“...if not now
Maybe later, I don't care
For you
I can wait...”*

As the song ended, Ilya set the guitar down and raised his eyebrows, blue eyes filled with curiosity.

“C'mon, Hollander, tell me what you think.”

“I like it,” he smiled, hugging his pillow. “It's really good, it might actually be one of your best.”

“I think so too,” Ilya beamed, then reached over to Shane's thighs, which he squeezed. “I'm gonna be a rockstar someday.”

“Of course you will.”

Ilya narrowed his eyes as he leaned even closer to Shane. “You do not believe in my talents, Hollander?”

“You know I do,” Shane pushed him back. “I’ll be cheering for you in a couple of years, maybe I’ll even go to a concert or two.”

“You’ll be my groupie.”

“Your groupie?” he laughed.

“What? You are sexy enough to be my groupie,” Ilya grinned, winking at Shane, who rolled his eyes.

The knock on the door caught their attention and they both turned to it, watching as Yuna appeared there, a smile on her lips.

“Dinner is ready boys.”



Ilya glided across the ice, his eyes sharp and focused, his jaw clenched as he calculated the exact move he needed to make. With a glance to the side, he saw Shane coming in from his right and before the player from the opposing team could even think of reaching out for the puck, he sent it flying over to Shane, who took it as gracefully as ever. He grinned, his upper body leaning forward as he put on even more speed into his skating, dodging every player that came his way.

In a matter of seconds he was back to sharing space with Shane and it only took one swift nod of his head for the puck to come back to him. He steadied on his stick, adjusted his body slightly and sent the puck flying to the goal, a wide grin on his lips as the crowd erupted in cheer and the buzzer went off, announcing the end of the game.

He skated straight over to Shane and wrapped his arms around him as he laid an obnoxiously loud kiss on his cheek. As Shane cheeks turned a bright pink, Ilya laughed and pinched them underneath his helmet. He always loved to see the way Shane got when he was embarrassed, it was extremely endearing.

“Stop it,” Shane whined, pushing Ilya away.

“No, you are my best friend and best player, let me show you some love, Hollander.”

“Oh my God, you’re ridiculous.”

“But you love me,” he said in a singing tone as Shane rolled his eyes. “Admit it, you love me.”

“Fuck off.”

Ilya laughed, but draped his arm over Shane's shoulder as they slowly skated off of the ice. Most of the team had already left the ice when they did, but it didn't matter, everyone knew when Ilya and Shane were together they barely paid attention to anyone else. Since the moment Ilya arrived at the school, it had been him and Shane against the world.

“Good game, guys.”

“Thanks, coach,” Ilya nodded, walked to his cubby and started to remove his gear, his eyes finding Shane, who was sitting on the cubby right next to him, removing his skates. “Hey, Wyatt is throwing a party tonight. You going?”

“You know I'm not exactly a big fan of parties,” Shane looked up with a wrinkled nose, then shrugged. “But you should go.”

“What are you gonna be doing for the night then?”

“I don't know, maybe I'll get some takeout and watch a movie,” he stood up, hands running through his hair. “I'm really tired, even if I wanted to go to this party, I would end up being the worst company ever.”

“That could never happen, Hollander,” Ilya beamed, leaning closer to once again pinch his cheek. “You can be very boring, but you are always good company.”

“Thanks... I guess.”

Ilya chuckled. “Then we go to your house and watch movie, da*?”

“You can go to the party, Ilya.”

“I don't wanna go.”

“Yes, you do.”

“No, I do not,” he assured Shane, even if they both knew it was a lie. “We'll get some burgers and fries, watch a scary movie and then I'll show you some of the songs I'm writing before we have a sleepover. Sounds like a good night, da*?”

“What makes you think my parents will let you sleep at my place?”

“Your parents love me, Hollander, of course they will,” Ilya blew a raspberry at him, then gestured over his shoulder. “I'll hit the showers, don't leave without me.”

Shane wandered through the unfamiliar house, his eyebrows furrowed in worry and his eyes attentive to any sign of movement. The music was loud and every single room was packed with people either dancing, making out or drinking their whole weight in alcohol. He wasn't a puritan, he had partook in the usual rituals of a party, including a night where he made out with this girl under the stairs and had to hear the whole team talk about it the next day, but sometimes it all felt too much and too exposed.

He turned a corner and sighed, relief washing over him as he saw Ilya sitting on the floor, head leaned against the wall. Their eyes met seconds later and Ilya -obviously drunk- let a wide smile take over his lips as he made grabby hands in the air, urging Shane to get closer.

"You are drunk," Shane sighed as he kneeled in front of Ilya, who shook his head.

"I am not drunk, Hollander, you know Russians don't get drunk."

"Tell that to the massive hangover you're gonna get tomorrow," he smirked, then grabbed his arm and swung it over his own shoulder. "C'mon, get up, I'm gonna get you home."

"But the party isn't over."

"It is for you."

Shane used all his strength to help Ilya to his feet, a light groan escaping him as Ilya set most of his weight on him. He wrapped an arm around his waist, then calmly made his way across the house -avoiding most of the people that wanted to talk to them- and outside. Thankfully for Shane, Ilya's aunt's house wasn't that far away and he didn't wear himself out as much as he expected.

"Is your aunt home?"

"No," Ilya sighed, his blue eyes kind of lost. "She went to a conference in boring ass Ottawa and won't be back until tomorrow."

"But you got your keys, right?"

"*Da.*"

Shane waited, but Ilya didn't even attempt to reach for his keys. He sighed, helped his friend lean against the wall and fumbled through the pocket of his jeans in search of the key. As Ilya smirked, Shane rolled his eyes and gave him a light punch on the shoulder, laughing as Ilya groaned.

"That serves you right," he opened the door and helped Ilya inside before making sure it was all locked behind them. "C'mon, Ilya, I'm gonna need you to actually put some effort into walking up the stairs."

"Fine."

Shane kept his arm wrapped around Ilya's waist as they made their way upstairs, which turned out to be a lot easier than he had predicted. Once inside the bedroom, he carefully laid Ilya down and helped him remove his sneakers. He took off his own shoes, then unzipped his hoodie and set it aside before climbing into the bed along with Ilya, who was staring at him intensely.

“What? You need a bucket or something?”

“Hollander,” Ilya practically whispered, his hand clutching onto Shane's shirt. “Hollander...”

“Are you okay?”

“Hollander, you know I like you, right?”

“I know, buddy, I like you too.”

“No no no,” he whined, his grip on Shane's shirt getting even tighter. “I *really* like you, Shane.”

“We've been through this before, buddy. I like you too, it's all good.”

“Hollander,” he said a bit more firmly and Shane raised an eyebrow, surprised at how sober he sounded all of a sudden. “I *like* you, like I really do like-” Ilya didn't finish, blue eyes surveying his face for a moment before he moved closer.

It happened so fast Shane barely had time to react, so when his mind finally processed what was happening, his lips were moving along with Ilya's in a soft kiss.

He pulled away swiftly, big brown eyes staring back at Ilya, who frowned. Shane didn't know how to react, he wasn't expecting something like this and despite the butterflies that had flooded his stomach, he knew he had to be the responsible guy and keep things as they should. They were friends, that was all they were.

“Hollander-”

“You need to get some sleep, Ilya,” Shane quickly said and moved away, a stern look in his eyes as Ilya nodded. He bit his lip, his mind working on overdrive as he watched Ilya lie down on the bed and pull the covers on top of him. Once he had his eyes closed, Shane allowed himself to let out a breath he didn't even realize he was holding. He sat down on the edge of the bed, his heart beating so fast he thought he might have a heart attack right there.



Ilya had his sweatpants and hoodie on as he made his way down the stairs, his hair was still slightly damp and there were bags under his eyes, but for most part he was feeling pretty

good. He followed the smell of bacon and went straight to the kitchen, a small smile on the corner of his lips as he saw Shane standing by the stove.

“Good morning,” he said softly as Shane looked at him over his shoulder. “You didn't need to spend the night, you know?”

“I wanted to make sure you were alright.”

“Thank you,” he practically whispered. “Do your parents know you here?”

“Yes, I called them to explain everything,” he paused for a second, taking a sip of his own coffee. “So expect a very stern lecture from my mom next time she sees you.”

“Oh no, a lecture from Yuna Hollander can be lethal,” he chuckled, but Shane simply nodded.

He sat down on the table, reached for the coffee and poured himself some before taking a huge bite of one of the bacon slices that were on the plate in front of him. As he ate, Ilya could tell there was some awkwardness in the air and Shane's refusal to look at him for more than a second was the confirmation.

He sighed, fully aware of what he had done the previous night, but not ashamed of it in the slightest. It was getting hard for Ilya to hide his feelings and being slightly drunk -after all he would never admit to ever being fully drunk- helped things come out before he could think of a better strategy.

“Shane,” he said softly, trying his best not to scare him away. “We need to talk about what happened last night.”

“Nothing happened.”

Ilya frowned. He waited for Shane to say something else or to at least look him in the eye, but nothing. He kept his back to him and his eyes on the window that led to the backyard.

“Shane-”

“Nothing happened, Ilya,” his voice a bit louder and as he finally turned around Ilya could see the truth in his eyes. Shane was never good at lying, specially when it came to Ilya.

“Nothing happened and there is absolutely nothing to talk about.”

“You really think this is the way to go?”

“Ilya,” he said firmly, just like he had done the night before and Ilya swallowed. “Nothing happened, okay? You were drunk, I brought you home and helped you to bed, that's all.”

Ilya felt his stomach drop and his heart felt like it was about to come out of his throat. How could he simply pretend nothing had happened? How could Shane expect him to bottle up everything that he was so ready to say?

“We are friends,” he eventually said, forcing a smile as Ilya nodded slowly. “Best friends.”

“Best friends,” Ilya whispered, the words stinging more than any hangover.

18 years old

Shane didn't feel like partying, but they had just graduated and this was the last high school party he would ever be able to attend, so he pushed back his tiredness -along with all the preparation he had already started doing for college- and decided to go. He also had promised Ilya he would be there to watch him play weeks ago and Shane wasn't one to break promises, even if things had not been the best between them the past year.

After the kiss, their relationship had taken a sudden shift. They spent three days completely ignoring one another, then when they started talking again things were clearly awkward, but they chose to ignore it. It took them nearly a month to get things back to normal, except they both knew they were far from normal. It was more like pretending, faking a normalcy in the hopes that one day that would become the new normal and they could just go on with their lives like nothing had happened.

That killed Shane, because he knew it was partially because of him that things had gone this way. He could have talked to Ilya the morning after the kiss like he wanted to, they could have found a way to make things right, but Shane was too scared, too afraid of what acknowledging what had happened could mean for their friendship, which was the one thing Shane cherished the most in his life.

The house was already packed when he got in, loud music playing, people dancing, smoking and drinking. His eyes immediately surveyed the place in search of Ilya, but he seemed nowhere to be found. He walked further in and grabbed himself a beer, taking a few sips as he tried to find a less crowded place for him, when he saw Troy -one of his teammates- walking towards him.

“Hollander, we didn't think you would make it.”

“I wasn't really in the mood, but I did promise Ilya I'd watch him play,” he shrugged and Troy gave him a quick nod. “Have you seen him, by the way?”

“I saw him a couple minutes ago, he said he was going to get ready for his big moment,” he smirked. “You know the guy is a big diva.”

“That he is,” Shane took a couple more sips of his beer, then turned his full attention to Troy. “Have you noticed something different in him?”

“Like what?”

“I don't know, I feel like he's been a bit distant the last couple of days, quieter than usual too and I can't figure out why.”

“Yeah, I kind of noticed that too, but he is always dodging any serious conversation we try to have with him, so I didn't even bother to ask, to be honest,” he wrinkled his nose, eyes still on Shane. “I figured if he would talk to anyone it would be you.”

“No,” Shane sighed. “Not this time.”

Shane bit his lip. He was worried, something inside of him didn't feel quite right, but before he could process everything and try to make sense of what was going on, the lights dimmed and the music stopped. He frowned, but only seconds later watched as Ilya stepped into the improvised stage in the living room. He couldn't help the immediate smile that spread across his lips and without even realizing, he made his way through the crowd and to the front of the stage, his eyes landing on Ilya's for the first time that night.

They held each other's gaze for a good minute, Ilya's smile sending a wave of warmth through his body and a shiver down his spine. That moment, as he stood in the middle of a crowd with Ilya looking only at him, Shane realized what he had been trying to hide for so long.

“Hey guys,” Ilya finally spoke into the microphone. “Gracie asked me to play you guys some songs tonight and since this is our last party all together, I figured you all deserved this treat.”

Shane smirked and watched as the crowd cheered. Ilya knew how to work a crowd, whether it was on a makeshift stage or on the ice. He turned his attention back to him as the first chords filled out the air and found Ilya staring right back at him again, his voice incredibly soothing.

*“...all five horizons revolved around his soul, as the earth to the sun, yeah
Now the air I tasted and breathed has taken a turn...”*

He knew the song, he knew every single song Ilya had ever written, but it felt like this was the first time he actually heard* this one. And if he said the song paired with the way Ilya was looking at him throughout the whole thing didn't leave him nearly breathless, he would be lying.

*“...all the love gone bad, turned my world to black
Tattooed all I see, all that I am...”*

Shane inhaled deeply, a rush of adrenaline running through his body as one question and one question only remained on his brain. Was the song about him?



Shane needed answers.

Ilya's stare, the song, the way he had been acting the last couple of days, it was all too much and Shane needed to know the truth about what was going on. So he promised himself he would be brave, that he would walk up to Ilya and ask. Shane was tired of lying to everyone, he was tired of lying to himself and pretending he didn't care, because the truth was he cared a little too much.

So he made his way across the house, searching for Ilya in the crowd just like he had done in so many other parties they attended, just like he had done on that one fateful night that changed everything for them. He heard a familiar voice in the distance and followed it until he entered a game room, where people were playing pool, smoking weed and making out. One of those people just happened to be Ilya, who was sitting on a large leather couch with Gracie on his lap and her tongue down his throat.

Shane stayed still, watching the scene in front of him with a lump on his throat and a pounding heart. It surely wasn't something new, he had seen it many times before, but it felt different now, because suddenly he was aware of his feelings and that made everything suck. He blinked a couple of times and felt his stomach curl up, which finally prompted him to turn around and leave the room.

He rushed through the sea of people, avoiding the curious eyes of his colleagues and the calls of some of his teammates as he made his way outside. There was a cool breeze, which he gladly took in, his glassy eyes scanning the mostly empty street. He took in a couple deep breaths and then slowly made his way back home, his mind racing, but his feet feeling they weighed a ton.

He had been so stupid and it seemed like the consequences of those actions had finally caught up to him.

Shane felt a surge of relief take him over as he made it inside his house, his eyes burning as he tried his best to keep himself from shedding any tears. He ignored his parents, made it up the stairs and didn't stop until he was secluded in the comfort of his bedroom. It was only then that he allowed himself to finally cry, hugging onto the pillows as he thought back to the kiss he and Ilya had shared just about a year prior. How easy things could have been if he had only been a little bit braver.



Shane didn't know what time it was, but he could see the sunlight peaking in through the closed curtains of his bedroom. He had been awake for most of the night, staring into darkness as he replayed every single minute of the party. He felt so elated when he saw Ilya playing, the song speaking to him in a way that he had never felt before, only to have it all crashing down when he saw him with Gracie.

He felt like a fool for pushing Ilya away, for pushing him into someone else's arms. He could have told him the truth, explained how scared he was to lose his friendship if anything were to happen. Now, Shane could barely imagine how it would be to face Ilya again when all he could see when he thought of him was his hands on Gracie's hair and his lips on hers.

"Shane," the soft voice distracted him and Shane quickly turned around on the bed, watching as his mother stood there with a small smile, despite the clear worry in her eyes. She closed the door behind her, her eyes never leaving him as she sat down on the edge of the bed. She laid a hand on his leg, squeezing it softly as Shane sighed. "You came home last night in a rush, barely acknowledged us in the living room, you didn't respond to us when we called and then you skipped breakfast. I'm starting to get worried, Shane."

"I'm sorry," his voice was so low he barely heard himself. He cleared his throat and sat up on the bed, pushing some of his hair back as he reached for one of the pillows, hugging it against his chest. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to worry you guys."

"What is wrong, Shane? You know you can tell us anything."

"I-" Shane sighed, unsure of what to say first or how to even describe everything that he was feeling. "It's-"

"Ilya?" Yuna asked and Shane arched an eyebrow. "I can tell things haven't been the same between the two of you lately, there's some distance there and I don't know what happened, but I can see that it is affecting you."

Shane simply nodded, relieved that his mom had eased them into this whole conversation.

"Did you guys fight?"

"I wish it was that simple," he bit his lip, then took in one deep breath as he prepared himself for what he was going to say. He had to rip off this band-aid once for all. "Mom, there's something you need to know about me."

Yuna nodded and Shane wanted to take her hand in his for comfort, but at the same time he didn't know how she would react.

"I've been debating about this for a while now, trying to understand things myself and I-" Shane groaned, unable to say anything else, his mouth suddenly too dry.

"Sweetie, I know," Yuna suddenly said and Shane frowned.

"You do?"

“Me and your father surely suspected, then over the years we've been watching you and Ilya and-” Yuna shrugged, a warm smile on her lips as she leaned closer to caress Shane's cheeks. “We've been waiting for the day you'd tell us about you two for a while now, to be honest.”

“That's the thing, mom, there's nothing between us,” Shane felt a sting of pain in his chest as the words left his mouth. “He-He kissed me last year and I shut him down, I ignored his attempts to talk and now I'm scared I might lose him forever.”

“Oh, sweetie,” Yuna quickly shifted in the bed and sat right beside Shane, pulling him under her arm. “Have you two talked? Does he know how you're feeling right now?”

“No,” he sniffed. “I went to talk to him yesterday at the party, but I saw him with this girl and-”

“That's why you came back home that way?” Shane nodded and Yuna gently kissed his head. “Sweetie, love can be complicated and messy, but if you don't at least try you'll never know how great it could have been. And as someone who has seen the way you and Ilya gravitate towards one another, I can tell you that it would be a shame to waste what could be something amazing.”

“You really think that? That we could be something amazing?”

“You already are, Shane,” she smiled down at him, then planted yet another kiss on his forehead. “Talk to him before it's too late.”

Shane nodded, then pulled his mother into a tight hug. He felt his whole body relaxing at her touch and for the first time in hours he didn't feel like shit. As he pulled away from her, his big brown eyes found hers and he could see nothing but love and care in them.

“Shane, I need you to know that me and your father, we love you very much. And we will love you forever, no matter what comes your way, no matter what you decide to do with your life. You will always have us, okay?”

“Okay.”



Shane shifted his weight from one foot to the other, his hands tucked in his pockets as he waited for the door to open. He had spent hours practicing what he was going to say, how* he was going to say, but once he actually reached Ilya's house, it seemed like everything had suddenly vanished. All he knew was that he needed to do this, he needed to sit down with Ilya and talk about everything that had happened the past year, be honest about his feelings and how much Ilya meant to him.

The outcome of it all wasn't something Shane could predict, but he was hoping that whatever it was they decided to do, whichever road they decided to take, all Shane truly wanted was the certainty that they would remain in each other's life. That was truly all that mattered to him, because Ilya meant too much to him and he wanted him in his life forever, no matter what.

Once the door finally opened and he saw Ilya's aunt standing there, Shane had to take a deep breath. His palms were sweaty and he could've sworn he was shaking a little bit, but he was not about to back down.

"Shane? Was not expecting you here today."

"Sorry if I'm interrupting, but I wanted to talk to Ilya. Is he home?"

"Oh dear, I'm sorry, but Ilya is gone."

"Oh," Shane frowned, but nodded his head slowly. "Is okay, I'll come back later and-"

"No, Shane, he's *gone*," she emphasized the word, her eyes filled with sorrow. "He went back to Russia. His plane left earlier this morning."

Shane couldn't speak, he couldn't breath, he could barely move. All he could do was stand there as his heart beat so fast it was physically painful. Ilya was gone, without any explanation, without even a hug, a word of comfort or a goodbye. He had just left him.



"That's it?" Rose asked, a fry hanging from her fingers as she stared back at Shane, who nodded. "He literally just left without saying anything?"

"Yep. I saw him at the party and then seven long years without a word, without a text or a call, nothing until tonight."

"That's fucked up," Hayden practically whispered, still trying to wrap his head around the whole thing.

"It is," Rose stated as she leaned closer to Shane. "But it's also really strange, right? I mean, the guy basically serenaded you the whole night, but he just got up and left out of the blue? It doesn't make sense."

"I know."

"You need to talk to him, Shane."

"Maybe you could talk to your friend that got us the ticket to the concert, she might be able to tell us in which hotel he-" Hayden arched an eyebrow as Shane took the business card out of

his pocket and placed it on top of the coffee table. “How did you get this?”

“He gave it to me himself,” Shane sighed, leaning back against the couch. “He told me I should show up if I wanted to talk.”

“You’re going, right?” Rose asked.

“I’m still not sure.”

“You need to go, Shane, you need to talk to him and demand some answers. He owes you that much after just walking away from you.”

“She’s right, Shane. You have the opportunity to finally understand what happened, you can’t let that just slip away.”

Shane sighed, his eyes locked on the business card on the coffee table. He knew they were right, he needed answers, but there was a part of him that feared what opening that can of worms could entail. He had spent so long trying to get over Ilya, could he really bring him back into his life like this?

Chapter 3: The Rockstar

Ilya was spent. After a morning filled with interviews and a small photoshoot for the local newspaper, he craved the comfort of his hotel room, where he could order room service, lie under the covers and watch some crap reality show that would luckily take his mind off of work and help him relax. Except there was one thing he was sure he wouldn't be able to push back or forget anytime soon and it was obviously the fact that he had once again, after seven long years, been face to face with Shane Hollander.

Ilya had left Montreal at eighteen years old, in a rush, sad and filled with regrets. It had not been an easy decision for him, but at the time it felt like the only possible one. His father needed him -even if he never admitted it himself-, his brother was a dead weight and leaving felt like the best way to guard his heart. It turned out that even away, even without any contact, the ghost of Shane Hollander had always been there, with every song he wrote, with every memory he guarded from his teenage years. Shane was everywhere.

And sure, he would be lying if he said that when he signed on to a tour across Canada he didn't think about running into Shane somehow, but not even in a million years had Ilya imagined that it would happen at his concert and completely at random. He thought that maybe they could pass by one another in the grocery store, or at a Montreal game that Ilya decided to go to, but not in a packed arena screaming his name while he sang one of the many songs Shane himself had inspired.

But it happened and now Ilya was once again debating what to do with all the feelings he had inside, because they were a *lot*. Ilya was barely thirteen when he realized that he felt things too intensely sometimes, whether they were good or bad; but music had always helped, music had been the outlet he found to spew his demons, an outlet his poor mother was never able to find for herself.

A knock on the door broke him out of his chain of thought and Ilya sighed, pushing himself up from the bed and over to the door. As soon as he opened it, Svetlana was already walking in, her curls immaculated, her make-up perfect as always and in her eyes, that assertive look that usually meant she wanted to talk business or something extremely personal and serious. And he had a feeling he knew exactly what it was this time around.

"Please, come in, make yourself at home," he mocked, closed the door behind him and leaned against it as Svetlana sat on the edge of the bed, legs crossed and eyes fixed on him. "No, I did not know he was coming."

"How did you know what I was going to ask?"

"As if I couldn't see you staring at me with those eyes throughout the whole morning," he smirked, walked back to the bed and threw himself on it, arms crossed under his head. "We could never lie to one another, Sveta. Just like I could never lie to Shane."

“You seemed to do a pretty good job.”

“I didn't lie,” he quickly replied. “I kept myself quiet because I knew if I ever attempted to talk, I wouldn't be able to lie to him.”

“Fine, whatever you say,” she turned to face him. “What exactly did you two talk about?”

“Nothing much. Actually, his friends did most of the talking, he didn't seem that happy to see me if I'm being honest.”

“Wonder why.”

“Did you come here just to throw it in my face how much I fucked up with him?” he frowned as he sat up on the bed. “Because I've known that, I always knew what I did was wrong, but they needed me back home and if I stayed any longer around him I-”

Ilya sighed, rubbing his face with his hands as Svetlana moved closer. She laid a hand on his shoulder, squeezing it softly as she whispered some words in Russian.

“I'm sorry,” she said when he finally raised his gaze at her. “I know Shane Hollander is a touchy subject.”

“That's an understatement,” he scoffed.

“Are you guys seeing each other again? Or is he still so mad at you that he doesn't even want to get some answers? Because if it was me seeing you after seven years of radio silence, I would have so many questions to ask.”

“No, we don't have anything planned, but he knows what hotel I'm staying.”

“So you're leaving it all up to him?”

Ilya shrugged. “Considering what I did, I don't think I have the right to force him into a conversation if he doesn't want to, Sveta.”

Svetlana managed a smile, her hand resting softly against Ilya's cheek. “Be careful, okay? For both of your sakes, just be careful.”

“I promise to be on my best behavior.”

“That's not saying much,” she grinned and Ilya laughed, gently shoving her to the side.



The stage was mostly dark, just a couple lights on the back were still on as Ilya made it up

the steps, a glass of vodka in one hand, his notebook on the other and his guitar hanging from his shoulder. He sat by the edge, legs dangling as he took a couple sips of the vodka, the burning of the cold liquid quite soothing to him. He flipped through the many pages of his notebook until he found a page that was still mostly empty, although a couple words had been written down along with chord progressions.

He sat the glass aside and adjusted his guitar, his fingers strumming the strings. The sound quickly echoed in the empty arena, his blue eyes distant, memories of far easier days mixed with the ever blooming regret of all the things he never truly said flooding his brain.

*“...he seems dressed in all of me
Stretched across my shame
All the torment and the pain
Leaked through and covered me...”*

It had always been funny to think of how people perceived him, even as a teenager. To the outside world Ilya was the tough, sarcastic guy that was incredible at hockey, played some music and got all the girls. Deep inside, in a level only Svetlana and Shane truly knew, he was a scared little boy filled with so much insecurities, so much fear of ending up like his mother, but also with so much love to give.

*“...he is everything to me
The unrequited dream
A song that no one sings...”*

And when he realized, at only sixteen years old, that his best friend was the one person he loved most in the whole world, the one person he wanted to share everything with, that scared him. Which is why Ilya had spent so long debating whether or not to say anything, to do anything. But one drunken night had been enough for all his walls to break down and his feelings were exposed in maybe not the best way possible, but he couldn't deny he felt some sort of relief after that.

*“...I don't know what to do
I don't know what to do
When he makes me sad...”*

Part of that relief was washed away the previous morning obviously, but there was a part of Ilya that was glad that it had happened either way. Sure, Shane had turned him down, avoided the subject all together, but he felt lighter with himself for knowing he had at least tried.

*“...torn into pieces
I won't, no
I don't want to be this
But I won't let this build up inside of me...”*

Ilya sighed, set the guitar to the side and took the glass back in his hand, drinking the whole thing in two long gulps. He grabbed his phone, scrolled through some of his most recent messages -not entirely sure of what he expected to see there-, then logged onto his Instagram, typing Shane's name on the search bar almost immediately.

His Instagram wasn't exactly foreign territory to Ilya. He didn't pride himself on it, but he had over the years developed the habit of stalking it every now and then, mostly when he was all alone in a hotel room with nothing to do, or after a particularly romantic lyric came to him. He liked to know what was up with Shane, even if he never felt brave enough to comment or even like a post.

The most recent one was from the previous night, although it had not been posted by Shane himself. It was a photo of him, Rose and Hayden, the three of them smiling wide with the stage -still mostly dark- behind them. Ilya smiled, his finger hovering over Shane's face, the memories of all the times his thumb brushed across his freckles coming to mind.

You know I love your freckles, Hollander.

Impulsively, Ilya tapped on the photo, a heart appearing on the screen as he did so. They had seen each other again, they had talked -albeit not much-, so there was no more need to pretend. And Ilya was tired of pretending that Shane wasn't still someone he thought of every single day, or that most of his songs weren't about him, or that he regretted every single day for how he left things between them. He knew he had ruined everything, any chance at something, but there was no more turning back and all he could do was apologize and explain himself.

That was if Shane ever gave him the chance to do so.

“Hey,” the voice startled him and Ilya nearly knocked the glass down. “Gospodi*, are you alright?”

“Yeah,” Ilya quickly replied, forcing a smile even if he knew that didn't fool Svetlana. “Do you need me for anything?”

“We wanted to film some things for your social media,” she explained, arms crossed as she walked over to the stage, brown eyes never leaving him. “Are you sure you're alright?”

“Yes, I'm alright,” he assured her. “I was writing a new song and got kind of caught up in thoughts, just that.”

“It's been a while since you wrote a new song.”

“Seems like my inspiration has come back.”

“What a coincidence that it happens the day after you reunite with Shane, huh?”

Ilya doesn't reply, he doesn't have to, because he knows Svetlana is reading him better than he can do it himself.

“Do you need some time or-”

“No, let's go,” he pushed himself up, collected his things and quickly walked down the stage, following Svetlana down the row of empty seats.

“I know you said you didn't want to push him, that you want to give him the chance to decide what to do, but I think you should reach out to him.”

“Sveta, I-”

“Listen to me,” she cut him off and swiftly turned to face him, a hand resting on his shoulder. “You spent the last seven years running away, but you can't do that any longer. You love him and it's time for you to say it with all the words, it's time you lay out all the cards, because even if it doesn't end the way you'd like to, at least you'll finally have some closure. You'll both have the closure you never got to have back then.”

“I already know how this ends, Sveta.”

“No, you don't,” she shook her head. “All you know is that a seventeen year old boy was scared of ruining the friendship that you had, that doesn't mean he didn't feel the same way.”

“It's been seven years, I'm sure if he ever felt that way he has already gotten over it.”

“You haven't, what makes you think he did?”

Ilya frowned, not entirely sure of what to say to that. He had never even considered the idea that Shane felt the same way, because why would he? Shane deserved better.

“Hey,” Svetlana curled her finger under his chin, forcing him to look at her. “You've done so well the last couple of years, standing up to your brother, fighting for your dream to come true, going to therapy. If you can do all of that, you can also open up to Hollander.”

“I will try.”

“Good,” she smiled and planted a kiss on his cheek. “Now, c'mon, we got work to do, rockstar.”



The mix of emotions of having a crowd shout out his name and sing along to songs that were so meaningful to him always left Ilya feeling a bit overwhelmed. It was the life he had always dreamt of, and for that he was eternally grateful, but he always needed some time to decompress after a concert, to put his mind back in order and let his emotions cool down. Singing those songs for the whole world to hear was like opening a diary or letting people into his most inner thoughts.

So as soon as he left the arena, instead of going to some loud party filled with booze and people throwing themselves at him like most people would assume he did, Ilya went straight back to his hotel, took a nice and long bath, sat on the bed and sipped his vodka in silence, contemplating his day, his career and since he was back in Canada, his whole life in general.

He grabbed his phone and once again found himself stalking Shane's Instagram page, unsure what exactly he was expecting to see there. Shane wasn't one to post much -not at all if he was being honest-, so it wasn't a surprise that his Instagram was the exact same as it was earlier that day. He clicked on the message icon and let his finger hover over the keyboard, debating whether or not to follow Svetlana's advice and reach out for him.

Before he could make a clear decision, there was a knock on the door, which caused Ilya to frown. He wasn't expecting room service and Svetlana had already stopped by to tell him she was going to a party, there was no reason for him to be disturbed at the moment. He finished his vodka, set the glass aside and walked to the door, adjusting his sweatpants as he did so. Once the door was open, Ilya simply stood still, eyes stuck on Shane as he stood there equally silent.

“Shane,” he managed to say after about a minute.

“Hey,” his voice was so low it was almost a whisper. “I met Svetlana downstairs and she made sure they let me in.”

“Right,” Ilya nodded slowly, blinking a couple of times as if trying to wrap his head around what was happening. Shane was standing there in front of him, on his own accord and Ilya wouldn't let that go to waste. He took in a breath, stepped to the side and gestured for Shane to get in. “Sorry, come in, please.”

“Thank you.”

Ilya closed the door behind him and for a good minute they remained in silence, Shane's back to him as his heart pounded inside his chest. Not even on his first real concert had Ilya felt so nervous.

"It was nice to finally get the chance to talk to Svetlana," Shane eventually said, turning to face Ilya. "To meet her properly."

"She's been dying to meet you for a long time," Ilya added, hands in his pockets as he leaned back against the door, not daring to take a step closer. "Since she first ever heard of you, to be honest."

"Likewise."

Another moment of silence followed and Ilya debated whether or not he should say something, maybe offer Shane a drink, anything that would help ease the tension and awkwardness of the room. But before he could actually do anything, Shane had already stepped closer to him, his big brown eyes staring back at him in a way Ilya had seen many times before, usually whenever they were having serious and often uncomfortable conversations about Ilya's family or how Shane usually didn't really feel like most teenage guys.

Ilya loved that look as much as he loved everything about Shane, but he also feared it, because it always had the power to break down his walls. All of them.

"There's a part of me that wanted to rip off that business card, throw it away and just forget I had seen you again, pretend last night never existed so I could move on with my life," Shane said, his voice calm, steady and yet filled with emotion. "But I am also tired of living without answers, which you have withheld from me for seven fucking years."

Ilya swallowed, his body tense, his chest heaving as his breathing slowly became more labored.

"So you said you wanted to talk, let's talk," Shane added, arms crossed as he took yet another step closer to Ilya. "Tell me, why did you leave?"

Ilya sighed, trembling fingers running through his hair as he tried to find the best way to do this. He didn't have good excuses, he had cowardice, fear, a broken heart and an easy way out. None of those things were good enough, but Shane deserved the truth either way.

"My dad was getting worse and my brother's drug issues were also really bad, so I had to go back, I had to be there for my father, even if he didn't remember me much and when he did he didn't want me around."

"And you didn't think of telling me any of this? You didn't think me, your best friend, would understand something like that?"

"It wasn't about whether you'd understand it or not, Shane."

“Then what was it about, Ilya? Help me understand why on earth you think it was okay to hurt me that way.”

“Because you hurt me first!”

Shane frowned, confused eyes searching for some answers on Ilya's expression. “When did I hurt you?”

“You know exactly when,” Ilya quickly replied and Shane's eyes immediately changed into something a lot softer, as if the memories of that fateful night -and the following morning- had hit him. “I'm not saying what I did was right or that you deserved what I did to you, but I couldn't handle anymore, okay? I couldn't just stand there and be the good friend you wanted me to be, because I was so crazy about you that being around you without touching you, without kissing you was too much for me to deal with. And I tried to talk to you about it, but you-”

“So it's my fault? That's what you're trying to say?”

“What? No, no no no,” Ilya groaned, eyes down for a moment until he felt he could actually look Shane in the eyes again. “You didn't feel the same way and I get that, I never blamed or resented you for it, but being around you was too much for me, Shane.”

As Shane remained silent, Ilya walked past him and over to the mini bar beside his bed, pouring two glasses of vodka. He knew Shane wasn't exactly a fan of it, but he also remembered how whenever he felt slightly distressed or when a conversation proved itself to be too much, he would indulge in a sip or two. He handed one of the glasses to Shane, who took it easily and then drank from his own, hoping it would bring him some courage to go on.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and waited until Shane was comfortably seated beside him, their shoulders brushing slightly. Ilya inhaled deeply, his finger tracing the brim of the glass as he kept his eyes down to the floor.

“I tried really hard to go back to the way we were, to pretend that kiss never happened, to be the best friend you deserved me to be, but it was only making things worse for me, so when I did get the call from Moscow, I figured it was my easy way out.”

“When did you get the call? For how long were you hiding that from me?”

“Two months before graduation, the night of Wyatt's party,” he answered, watching as a frown formed on Shane's face. “I was wandering around the house and...”

Chapter 4: Teenagers Pt2

“When did you get the call? For how long were you hiding that from me?”

“Two months before graduation, the night of Wyatt's party,” he answered, watching as a frown formed on Shane's face. “I was wandering around the house and...”

7 years ago
18 years old

Ilya had his eyes down to his phone as he walked back inside the house, leaving the cool breeze of the night behind him. He had been sending messages to Shane for a couple minutes, but had yet to get any reply back, which obviously had already left him slightly freaked out. Shane wasn't great at messages, but when it came to Ilya he usually responded right away, so anything longer than five minutes felt like an eternity.

“Gonna be stuck on that phone the whole night, Rozanov?”

Ilya looked up immediately, the corner of his lips turning into a small smile as he saw Troy standing there with a drink in hand and a smirk on his face.

“Found yourself someone new already?” he wiggled his brows and Ilya rolled his eyes as he stuffed his phone in his back pocket. “I thought you said you were taking a break from hook-ups, or something like that.”

“I don't think that is what I said, Barrett,” Ilya chuckled, took the drink from his hand and took a quick sip, immediately making a face. “What the fuck is that?”

“Orange soda and vodka.”

“That's gross and that vodka is terrible,” he rolled his eyes, shoving the drink back to Troy. “Have you seen Hollander? I've been texting him for a while and he won't reply to me.”

“Last time I saw him he was with that girl Lucy,” he said, which made Ilya frown. “Is that girl from his class who's been trying to get in his pants for months now. It seemed like she was finally getting her wishes, you know?”

Ilya clenched his jaw, a tingling spreading across his spine at the words. He had promised himself he would keep his cool, that he would handle the situation the best way possible, but it was becoming increasingly more difficult for him to pretend that even the thought of Shane with someone else didn't make him sick.

“Dude, you know things would be a lot easier if you just told him the truth, right?”

“What are you talking about?”

“You and Hollander,” Troy said matter of factly, rolling his eyes as Ilya shook his head.
“C'mon, Rozanov, it doesn't take a genius to know you are down bad for the guy. Have you ever considered talking to him about it and maybe moving things forward?”

“Shane and I are just friends, Barrett,” Ilya replied, the words hurting more than any hit he had taken on the ice. “Just *friends*.”

“But you want more,” he fired back and Ilya didn't know if he should hit the guy or just be honest with him. “So why not actually do something about it?”

“Because even if you were right and I felt something for Hollander, which I don't, he doesn't like me that way.”

As Troy frowned, Ilya sighed, aware that his words had revealed a lot more than he wanted in the first place. He turned to the large table with drinks and grabbed himself a can of beer, drinking almost half of it before he allowed his eyes to meet Troy's again.

“You already told him, didn't you?”

“Gospodi*, Barrett, can't you just-”

“Admit it,” he cut him off. “You already told him.”

“What does it matter? Didn't you just say you saw him making out with some girl?”

“I never said they were making out, I said I saw him with her,” he explained. “And sure, they looked really cozy, but I don't think-”

“Fucking hell, Barrett, just shut up,” he groaned, setting his drink down. “I'm going home, okay? See you Monday.”

“Dude, c'mon, let's talk this out.”

Ilya didn't even bother answering, he just walked away from Troy and through the crowd of drunk teenagers, his eyes still attentive to his surroundings. When he was nearly at the door, he caught sight of Shane in what he assumed was an office, a smile on his lips as Lucy pressed herself against him, his hands holding onto her hips. Ilya swallowed, cursed himself under his breath and quickly made it out of the house, slamming the door shut behind him.

He stood by the front yard for a few minutes, taking in the cool breeze and allowing himself to calm down. Once he thought of himself able to do anything, he started his walk back home, his mind replaying the scene he had just seen over and over again. How could he be so stupid to think time would change things? How could he ever think that Shane would reciprocate the feelings he had for him?

He made it home in less than fifteen minutes and the moment he closed the door behind him, he could almost feel the tension in the air. He frowned, walked over to the living room and found his aunt there, sitting quietly on the couch.

“Ilya, you're back.”

“Is everything okay?”

“Actually, we got a call from Moscow,” she said as Ilya sat down on the coffee table in front of her.

“Is my father-”

“No,” she said before he could even think of finishing his question. “He's gotten worse though and Alexei hasn't been much better either.”

“What did he do now?”

“The usual,” she said, which to Ilya meant getting so high he could barely remember his own name. “His wife told me she was called into one of the bars he usually goes to, he could barely stand up, could barely even speak. She tried taking him to a hospital, but you know him.”

“Sadly,” he whispered, a lump forming on his throat at the thought of his brother destroying his own life while their father's own brain deteriorated, none of them being able to do anything for the other. Ilya hated that he still had any sort of feelings for the two people that always made his life a living hell, but he also couldn't help himself. “Did she say anything else?”

“That things are getting really difficult over there and she wanted to talk to you, maybe get you to convince Alexei to send your father into a facility where he can be taken care of.”

“Unless my father has completely lost himself already he will never agree to that,” Ilya shook his head, rubbing his thumb across his jeans in a futile attempt to keep his anxiety at bay. “And neither Alexei, that would mean admitting failure or something.”

“Then what are we gonna do?”

Ilya had an answer to that, something that could help his family and provide him with the distance he needed to forget about Shane as anything other than a friend, but even saying those words felt like thousands of daggers cutting through his skin.

“We'll figure something out.”



“I still think this is a terrible idea.”

“Yeah, you have said that about a hundred times already,” Ilya sighed, stuffing yet another piece of clothing into his suitcase. “And I already told you that this is the best thing I can do at the moment. He's my father, Sveta.”

“A father that not once showed you any sign of love, a father that sent you away the minute he had an opportunity,” Svetlana said and even over the phone, Ilya could tell just how frustrated she was. “And if that wasn't enough reason for you not to do this, there's also the fact that you are leaving Shane behind without even explaining to him what is going on.”

Ilya closed his eyes, his thumbs gently caressing his temple as he sat down on the bed. Ilya knew leaving without a goodbye wasn't a good idea, wasn't something he would be proud of doing either, but he didn't really see an alternative, not when things had been so complicated for him the past couple months.

“Ilya?”

“I'm here,” he nearly whispered, throwing himself back on the bed. “I can't tell him the truth, Sveta. If I tell him that I am leaving he will try to keep contact with me and if he does that, I will never be able to get over him.”

“But you don't want to get over him.”

“What I want and what I have to do are very different things,” he heard her sigh on the other side of the line and he could almost see the look of frustration she was probably sporting. “Shane has already made it very clear that he only sees me as a friend, which I did my best to be, but right now it's just too much.”

“And you think the best way to deal with this is by going back to Russia? To endure all the hell your brother is gonna put you through?”

“I can handle Alexei, Sveta.”

“*I hate this**” she mumbled in Russian a couple of times, earning a little chuckle from Ilya. “Don't laugh. I'm genuinely concerned for you, okay?”

“I know and I'm telling you everything is gonna be okay.”

“You can't be sure.”

“I'm being optimistic.”

“That's not very you.”

Ilya shrugged, almost as if Svetlana could see him. Before he could respond, he heard a knock on the door and then Shane's voice filled his ears, his eyes growing wide as he glanced over at the open -and fully packed- suitcase.

“Ilya?” Shane knocked again.

“Just give me a minute,” he cursed under his breath, pushing himself up as he ended the call with Svetlana, barely giving her any explanation. She would certainly be having words with him in their next call. He closed the suitcase, slid it under the bed and headed to the door, letting out a heavy breath before opening. “Hey, you didn't tell me you were stopping by.”

“And since when do I have to announce that I'm stopping by?”

“No, that's not-” Ilya shook his head. “Just come in.”

“Are you okay?” Shane asked, eyebrows arched as he eyed Ilya up and down. “You seem a bit jumpy.”

“I'm fine.”

“Ilya.”

“Shane,” he said back, their eyes locked on each other until Shane sighed, rolling his head. Ilya couldn't help but laugh, always so endeared by even the smallest thing Shane did. “Quit the pout, you brat, I'm doing fine.”

“You calling me a brat is ironic.”

“But you are a brat,” he smirked, nudging Shane gently as he walked past him. “You just hide it better.”

“Asshole.”

Ilya winked at him and the smile that spread across Shane's face was so big and beautiful, that he questioned every single choice he had made regarding them both the last couple of months. Maybe if they kissed again, maybe if he talked about it with Shane once more, maybe maybe *maybe*...

“Ilya?”

“Huh?” he frowned, realizing he had spaced out completely.

“Seriously, what's going on with you?”

“Nothing wrong, just a bit distracted, that's all.”

“Okay,” Shane replied, although Ilya could see the worry in his eyes. “So, you were on the phone with Svetlana?”

“You heard that?”

“I heard you saying her name,” he shrugged as he walked past Ilya. “Is she okay? She's still coming to graduation?”

“I don't think so,” Ilya said, relief washing over him at the realization that Shane had not just heard everything he was telling Svetlana. “She's in the graduation committee at her school

and she's got her own finals to worry about, so she doesn't think she will be able to make it here on time.”

“That sucks, I was actually looking forward to meeting her,” Shane shrugged and took a seat on the edge of the bed, arching an eyebrow as Ilya looked at him with a smirk. “What?”

“You were looking forward to meeting her? You, the guy who's been jealous of her ever since we met?”

“I'm not jealous of her.”

“Yes, you are,” he laughed, nudging Shane, who simply rolled his eyes. “You hate the idea that you are not my only best friend, or that there might be things I only tell her and not you.”

“That's bullshit.”

“Admit it, Hollander,” Ilya laughed, tickling Shane's side. “Admit you are jealous because you are not my only best friend.”

“Oh, my God, you're insufferable.”

“And you love me,” he said in a singing tone, tickling Shane even harder. It didn't take long for them to find themselves tangled in each other in bed, Ilya hovering on top of Shane, who squirmed under him as tears filled his eyes. The moment Ilya realized the position they were in though, he swiftly moved away from Shane, rolling to his side on the bed.

He closed his eyes, his mind racing with fear at the idea of Shane feeling uncomfortable, of him pushing any boundaries that he had already set up between them. Ilya glanced at him again and couldn't help the sight of relief that escaped him as he noticed Shane's quite calm expression. Crisis averted, they were okay, or as good as they could be considering everything.

“So,” he started, his heart nearly skipping a beat when Shane turned to look at him. “Tonight is movie night at the Hollander's, isn't it?”

“It is, indeed.”

“And Yuna Hollander allowed you to bail on it?”

“Kind of,” Shane grinned, moving slightly closer to Ilya, who had to do everything in his power not to kiss him right there. “I told her you were not feeling well and that your aunt wasn't home, so I wanted to check on you, so she agreed to postpone movie night to tomorrow.”

Ilya frowned. A part of him was ecstatic that Shane would rather spend his night with him than his parents, but another part of him just knew that if Shane was lying to his parents it was because there was something going on.

“But I thought you liked movie nights?”

“And I do, but with finals and college on the coming, mom has been a bit too intense and I needed at least one night away from all of that, you know?”

“So you lied to them and came here?”

“Where else would I go?”

Ilya swallowed, his heart clenching inside his chest. The way Shane looked at him, the tone of his voice and the smile on his face were so genuine, so filled with love -albeit not the kind of love Ilya wished it was- and he was going to break him. He already hated himself for what he was going to put Shane through.

“Ilya?” he blinked a couple of times, his eyes focusing on Shane again, who looked at him with an eyebrow raised. “You sure you are okay? You've been really weird tonight.”

“I'm good, I promise,” he smiled. “So, video games?”

“That sounds great, actually.”



Ilya wished he could be stronger. He wished he could look at Shane and not feel butterflies in his stomach or his heart pounding so hard that it felt like it was about to come out through his throat. He wished he could be the friend he deserved and wanted, which in some ways he was, but he could no longer contain the urge he felt to reach out and touch, hold, *kiss*.

He wanted Shane all to himself, he wanted to be able to tell everyone that Shane was the man he loved, the person he wanted to be with, the *only* person he wanted to be with. But he wasn't strong enough, not to tell the truth about his feelings and neither to tell Shane -or everyone else for the matter- that he was leaving in a matter of hours, that they probably would never see each other again. But while he couldn't express that in words, he could only hope his music was doing the trick, because as much as he tried, as much as he told himself to enjoy the moment and focus on the crowd in front of him, the moment he saw Shane, he was all he could look at.

*“...and now my bitter hands cradle broken glass
Of what was everything...”*

Shane was smiling at him, completely unaware that this would probably be one of their last interactions, that this would be the last time Ilya got to sing him a song.

*"...All the love gone bad, turned my world to black
Tattooed all I see, all that I am..."*

Ilya could feel his heart shattering with every word he sang, because every one of them was directed at Shane, at the way he laughed, the shy smile that appeared on his face whenever someone complimented him, his big brown eyes that were so incredibly expressive despite him not always realizing and of course the freckles. The freckles Ilya had fallen in love with the minute he first laid eyes on him, when they were just two stupid fourteen years old boys, who knew nothing about the world.

As the song approached the end and Shane moved even closer to him, Ilya could feel tears coming to his eyes, but he fought them back, he tried to keep himself collected. He wasn't strong, but he had to pretend to be, for his own sake. Shane would be better off without him, he would go on with his life, find new friends, get the job he always wanted at the Voyagers, meet a nice girl and get married, have beautiful kids that Ilya would never get to see, but he would love them anyway, because they were Shane's and he loved everything about Shane.

*"....I know you'll be a star in somebody else's sky
But why, why, why can't it be
Oh, can't it be mine?"*

He looked out at the crowd for the first time ever when the music finally ended, pale blue eyes glassy with the threatening tears. He heard the cheer, the applause, the screams and smiled, a part of him relieved there were so many people around, it was easier to keep his cool persona intact that way. He gave the crowd a quick thanks, then moved on to the next song, once again unable to keep his eyes away from Shane.

His set lasted about half an hour more and the second it was over, he had Gracie all over him, showering him with praises as he looked around the crowded room in search of Shane, who seemed to be talking to Troy in the distance. He sighed, letting his eyes linger on him for a moment more before Gracie whispered something in his ear. A year before, the sultry voice and the soft touch of her hand on his chest would have probably made him forget everything and everyone else, but after everything, it meant nothing.

Still, he followed her out of the living room and around the house to the game room, where a couple people were gathering to play pool, smoke weed and make out. She forced him down on the leather couch, sat down on his lap and almost immediately had her lips on his, her hands sliding through his curls as he tried his very best to focus on her and not on the constant thought in his head.



“You don't look very happy for someone who just performed for most of the school in the biggest graduation party of the year.”

Ilya looked up from his cup of vodka, eyeing Troy up and down before he shrugged.

“Are you alright, man?”

“Not really,” he admitted, chugging most of the vodka on his cup, the burning on his throat a welcoming feeling to try and distract him from everything else. “Life is shitty right now.”

“What's going on? Did you and Hollander fight or something?” he asked and Ilya frowned, not entirely sure why that would be his first thought. “I saw him leaving a couple minutes ago and he looked like shit too. Me and some of the guys called him up, but he barely even looked at us, just sprinted out of the house.”

Ilya didn't know what could have happened to Shane, but the simple thought of him being into some kind of trouble ached him, even if he knew nothing that might have happened would come even close to what was still to come.

“Have you texted him or something?”

“I did, but you know he's not very good at replying to texts,” Troy shrugged. “At least not ours. So maybe you should try it?”

“Yeah, I-I'll try it,” he lied. “Look, Barrett, I have to go.”

“Already? It's not even midnight, dude.”

“I have an early flight tomorrow so-” Ilya groaned as soon as he realized what he had said. Months of hiding, all to come crashing down after one cup of vodka. To make things worse, he knew Barrett's curious ass would not let that slip past him so easily. “Can you please forget I even said that?”

“Hard to, buddy,” he admitted. “What do you mean you have an early flight? Where are you going?”

“Can you, please, not tell this to anyone? At least not until tomorrow?”

“Sure.”

“I'm going back to Russia,” he said and he would be lying if he said that finally saying the words out loud to someone other than Svetlana didn't feel like taking a huge weight off of his shoulders. “For good.”

“What? Why?”

“It's complicated, so let's just leave it at that, okay?” As Barrett nodded, Ilya set his cup down and pulled the boy into a hug, patting his back gently. “I'll actually miss you, Barrett.”

“I'll miss you too, buddy.”

“Keep an eye on Shane for me if you can, okay?” Troy nodded again and Ilya gave him a small smile, still trying his best to keep the tears that had been threatening to fall for hours at bay. “I better go now.”

Ilya didn't wait for Troy to say anything back, didn't wait for another question or anything, he simply walked away, his eyes wandering through the crowd as he made his way to the door. He would never see those people again, people who had been around him for the last four years, who had in some way shaped the person he had become. In about twenty four hours he would be back in Russia, back to the bleakness of his family, back to being miserable.



Back in the hotel room, Shane and Ilya remained in the exact same position as before, both of them sitting on the edge of the bed, shoulder to shoulder. Silence had taken them over though as everything Ilya said seemed to float on the air, thick and awkward.

“I sent you a message the day you left,” Shane eventually broke the silence.

“I know, I saw it.”

“And you didn't even bother to answer me back?”

“Shane,” Ilya said, his tone doing all the talking.

“Don't *Shane* me,” he protested, finally getting up, his eyes filled with anger and Ilya couldn't even blame him, he knew he had fucked up, but he was trying his best to be honest, to make sure Shane understood why he did the things he did. “You just walked away from me, Ilya. Do you have any idea how much you hurt me? How difficult it was to get over the fact you had just walked away from me without an explanation, without even a goodbye?”

“Probably just as hard as it was for me to try to forget you.”

Shane blinked a couple times, his body tense as he processed what Ilya had just said. “Try?”

“Shane, I never once stopped thinking about you. Everything I did, everywhere I looked you were there,” he couldn't hold back any longer, no matter how much he had tried to suppress everything, it had all become too much and he needed to let it out. “You were in my mind in

every verse, every song I wrote, whether it was because you were the inspiration for it or because I wanted to play it for you like I used to do. You were the only ever constant in my life, the only thing that ever made me feel complete.”

Ilya could see Shane's chest heaving, he could see the flush on his cheeks and the million different things that his eyes were trying to convey. It was just as hard for him to be standing there as it was for Ilya.

“I loved you from the moment I met you and I still do.”

Shane closed his eyes, his lips pressed together as he seemed to assimilate everything he had just heard. It was a lot, Ilya had to admit, but it was time they made it all clear, because even if they never saw each other again, at least they could walk away without any questions left unanswered. When Shane finally locked eyes with him again, Ilya couldn't read him, which sent a shiver of dread down his spine.

“I loved you.”

“I know that and I wish that it had been enough for-”

“No,” Shane cut him off, shaking his head as Ilya cocked an eyebrow. “*I loved* you. I was in love with you.”

Ilya could feel his heart pounding inside his chest and his knees getting weak. The look in Shane's eyes was different from everything he had ever seen before.

“I had been struggling with the idea of being in love with you for a while, then at Gracie's party I saw you singing that song, looking at me that way and everything became clear to me. After you finished the set, I went to look for you so we could talk, but I-”

“You saw me and Gracie,” he finished and Shane nodded slowly. “That's why you left in a hurry.”

“I was feeling like crap and was ready to just shut it all down, squash those feelings inside, but my mom convinced me to talk to you. That's why I went to your aunt's house the next day, when she told me you had left. I was there to tell you that I loved you, but you had left me behind.”

“Shane-” Ilya tried to move closer, to touch him in some way, but Shane took a step back, shaking his head. “I'm so sorry.”

“Seven years, Ilya, you left me for seven years and now you walk back into my life and tell me you still love me and what? What do you expect me to do?”

“I don't-” He sighed, shaking his head. “I don't expect anything from you, Shane. I-I just wanted to give you the answers you deserved, the answers I should have given you seven years ago, but was too much of a coward to do so.”

Shane sighed, rubbed his face and then gave a quick look around the room as if trying to find something that could ground him, something that could make everything easier. He glanced

at Ilya once more, then shook his head and quickly walked away, without a look back, without even a word, just like Ilya himself had done years prior.

“Fuck,” he mumbled to himself, his eyes stinging with the tears that were threatening to fall. He took a couple deep breaths, rubbed his hands against his sweatpants and tried to tell himself that everything would be okay, that he would get over this. He had managed to live his life away from Shane for seven years, twenty four hours around him wouldn't be such an issue. He could deal with the void his presence would leave in him, just like he did before.

He scoffed at himself at the thought, grabbed his glass and filled up with more vodka, drinking it all so quickly his chest burned. He was about to pour himself another dose when the door opened and he immediately turned around, arching an eyebrow as Shane walked over to him, his eyes filled with resolve.

Ilya barely had time to process what was happening, because one moment he was looking at Shane, the other he had his lips on his and his fingers tangled in his hair. It took Ilya a couple seconds to respond, but eventually he allowed himself to melt against Shane's touch, a hand gently caressing his cheek as the other held onto his waist, pulling his body closer to his.

Chapter 5: The Boyfriend

“Shane,” Ilya practically whispered, his eyes still closed, his heart still pounding with excitement. He kept his forehead pressed against Shane's, his hands holding even tighter onto his waist, feeling the heat that emanated from his body and the light shivers that seemed to creep up from time to time.

He was in heaven, completely drunk in bliss to have Shane like this, against his body, with his lips still tasting his. But he also feared that maybe this was just a spur of the moment thing, something Shane needed to do before closing their chapter for good. It was a dreadful thought, but he had to weigh all the options, prepare himself for the worse while desperately waiting for the best.

“Shane,” he repeated, watching as Shane leaned his forehead against his chest, his fingers digging onto his biceps. He had so many questions to ask, but he resorted to silence, allowing Shane to take over, to decide what to do or say next. He owed him that much after everything he put him through. So he hummed softly against his ear, his fingers gently caressing his lower back in an attempt to both sooth Shane and also engrave the moment in his head forever. Whatever happened at least he had that moment to remind himself of.

Then Shane pulled away, his fingers suddenly tangled in Ilya's curls as he pulled him closer. Ilya could see the mix of emotions in his beautiful brown eyes; there was still so much pain there, pain he had caused and would always hate himself for it, but there was also care, affection and if he dared to hope, he could've sworn he saw that same glow he used to see whenever they were alone together, either watching a movie, playing video games or talking hockey.

“You still love me?”

“I still love you,” Ilya said slowly, the lump on his throat making it a lot more difficult than it should be. “I never stopped loving you, Shane.”

“Fuck,” Shane mumbled, his fingers still playing with Ilya's hair. “Fuck, fuck, fuck.”

“Shane,” Ilya's voice was soft, filled with care and patience. He didn't want Shane to feel pressured to do anything, to say anything. He could leave for good and never look back and Ilya would understand. “Shane, I need you to know that I didn't say any of this expecting something back from you, I told you all of this because you deserve to know the truth, no matter what.”

“I spent years telling myself that I had gotten over you, that I didn't care about you or the way you left,” he finally said, his grip on Ilya's hair tightening a bit. “Whenever the thought of you seemed to be creeping up on me, I downed myself at work, I forced myself to think of anything else, but you were always there somehow, in the back of my mind, fighting for space. This is why I never allowed myself to search for you on the internet or anything,

because I knew if I did, I wouldn't be able to lie to myself anymore, I would keep looking and imagining what you were doing and with who you were with.”

Ilya nodded, but kept himself silent, allowing Shane to let out everything he had been holding on the past seven years.

“I think I tried so hard to forget you, that it wasn't until I saw you yesterday night that I realized just how much I still cared about you, how much your presence alone still made my knees weak and my hands sweat,” he bit his lip and Ilya had to control all his urges not to kiss him again. “It took you singing that song again, in front of me, for me to realize that I never did in fact forget you, that I never stopped loving you.”

“Shane,” Ilya felt like a fucking broken record, repeating his name over and over again, but he had so much going on inside his head, inside his chest, that Shane's name was the only coherent thing he could say.

“Fuck, I missed you so much,” Shane said before crashing their lips together once more, this time more urgent, more desperate, filled with passion and need. And this time Ilya didn't need time to process anything, he deepened the kiss immediately, cupping Shane's face in his hands as he slid his tongue inside his mouth, drawing out a soft moan that nearly drove him crazy.

Was this some kind of dream? Would he wake up suddenly and find himself back in bleak old Russia?

Shane's nails dragging across his back brought him back to reality and he allowed himself to forget everything else. He pulled him even closer as they stumbled around the hotel room, a quick chuckle escaping them both as Ilya's knee hit the bed and they both fell on it, Shane on top of him, his hands sliding down his naked torso, sending shivers all over Ilya's body.

It was everything Ilya had always dreamt of, longed for and it was finally happening, he had Shane in his arms, kissing him, feeling him up, drawing out moans from him and making him feel incredibly hot. He allowed his hands to slide inside Shane's shirt, feeling the warmth of his skin and hard muscles of his back. It felt so good, Ilya could feel the immediate twitch of his cock, that was growing harder inside his sweatpants.

“Are you-” he licked his lips, his eyes locked on Shane, whose cheeks were so flushed his freckles were even more prominent. “Are you sure you want to do this?”

“You don't want to?”

“Fuck, Shane, of course I do, it's just-” he smiled, his thumb gently tracing Shane's swollen bottom lip. “Maybe we should talk a little bit more before-”

“Seven years, Ilya,” Shane cut him off, his eyes filled with want and desperation. “Seven fucking years we've been waiting for this, I think we can talk about it later.”

“Are you sure?”

“Seven years, Ilya,” he repeated and Ilya couldn't help but laugh.

“Damn, Hollander, when did you get so fucking eager?”

“Shut up,” he chuckled and Ilya felt his heart burst with love. He had missed Shane's laugh, the way his cheeks flushed so easily, the way he always looked at him like he was the only other person in the world. Ilya missed Shane so much, he could barely contain his happiness to be there with him.

He reached for Shane's shirt and quickly removed it, tossing it to the floor as he stared at the man straddling his body. Shane had always been perfect to Ilya, but watching him there, on top of him, his shirt off and his muscled body displayed for him was nearly an otherworldly experience. He allowed his hands to slide down his chest, then his stomach, a sly smile on the corner of his lips as Shane shivered.

He opened Shane's jeans while he planted kisses across his stomach, hearing his moans slowly fill up the air. It was the best melody Ilya had ever heard, the only melody he ever wanted to hear again. He rolled them over, pulling Shane's jeans off of him in a swift motion that earned him a gasp of surprise. He chuckled, unable to contain his smile as he once again laid kisses down Shane's body, while his fingertips traced his feverish skin.

It was overwhelming in the best way possible and Ilya could barely keep his mind focused enough to fully understand what was going on. One second they were kissing like their lives depended on it; the next he had Shane in between his legs, taking his cock into his mouth; then Ilya was on top of him again, kissing and sucking on Shane's neck while he opened him up. All the while the most delicious moans filled the room, both of them completely lost in each other.

“Ilya,” Shane dragged out his name as he entered him, the sensation so incredible Ilya nearly lost his mind. He kept a slow pace, savoring each second they had together, engraving every sound, every move, every look Shane gave him in his mind.

Nothing would ever compare to this moment.

“Fuck, Shane,” he groaned, his whole body tingling. He stroked Shane's cock, watching in delight as he threw his head back, eyes nearly rolling back as he moaned his name repeatedly. Ilya was in heaven, completely blissed out and in love.

Every touch felt so good, so enhanced by the years of expectation, that it wasn't exactly a surprise when their movements became more frantic, their moans more desperate and within minutes they were both clinging onto one another, their orgasms washing over them in huge waves of pleasure.

Ilya collapsed on top of Shane shortly after, his breathing ragged, his eyes heavy and sweat all over his body. Still, he had never felt so good, so happy, so incredibly in love.

“Was it everything you thought it would be?” Shane asked, his voice almost a whisper as he dragged his fingers across Ilya's back.

Ilya chuckled, planted a kiss on Shane's shoulder and nodded. "Even better."



It was past midnight and the bedroom had grown quiet. The clothes remained on the floor, the half empty bottle of vodka on the nightstand while on the bed, Shane had his head against Ilya's chest, his legs hooked around his as he gently traced the vein on his arm. He couldn't remember ever feeling so calm, so relaxed and happy. Ilya was there with him, he could hear his heart beating, his hard muscles, the softness of his skin against his. For so long he tried to squash his feelings to preserve their friendship, then had to fight his own instincts to try and forget him, but finally he could just be with him.

"Are your parents still in Montreal?"

The question snapped Shane out of his thoughts and he adjusted himself on the bed, his body still mostly on top of Ilya as he rested his chin against his chest. "No, they moved back to Ottawa about a year after graduation. With me in college, they figured it would be okay to go back, besides it was easier for dad with his job and everything."

Ilya hummed, his arms tightening around Shane. "I have two concerts in Ottawa next week, maybe I could pay them a visit."

"They would love to see you," Shane smiled, brushing a curl away from Ilya's eye. "They really miss you."

"I miss them too."

"You might have to endure one of Yuna Hollander's lectures though, because she might miss you, but she's still pissed at you for leaving."

"I can endure that," he smiled, leaning closer to peck Shane's lips. "Actually, I might even miss her lectures."

"No need to go there," he chuckled, his eyes tracing Ilya's features, taking in every little mole on his face, the way his curls fell down his forehead, the glow in his eyes. He was feeling so good with him, so at ease, so when the dreadful thought of Ilya going back to Russia any time soon came to mind, he nearly lost his breath. "Wait, where do you live now?"

Ilya frowned, as if the sudden question didn't make much sense to him, but soon enough his face relaxed and his smile came back.

"I'm kind of divided between New York and Boston at the moment."

“Boston, of course,” he practically whispered, causing Ilya to chuckle. “What?”

“You do know there's absolutely nothing going on between me and Svetlana, right?” He cradled Shane's face, his thumb gently stroking his freckled cheek. “There was never anything between the two of us, we were always just good friends.”

Shane nodded. Ilya was right, he had always felt a little bit jealous of Svetlana and for a long time he couldn't fully understand why, but once his own feelings became clear to him, he realized that a part of him always wondered if one day Ilya would get tired of him and go to her, choose her instead of him. And in some ways, knowing that she got to be around Ilya the last seven years didn't exactly ease that thought. Which was stupid since he was the one naked on Ilya's bed, he was the one Ilya said he loved.

“Hey,” Ilya pecked his lips once more, then adjusted them so they were both lying on their side, looking at one another. “Svetlana's my friend and her family helped me a lot, not only to deal with my own family, but also to make sure my career took off. Turns out her family doesn't only have connections in Russia, but also a lot of good friends in the USA, which is why I even got a chance to play my music, record an album and go to radios. I owe her a lot, but you need to trust me when I say that there's nothing more than friendship between the two of us.”

“I trust you,” Shane quickly replied, his eyes moving down to Ilya's necklace. He let his fingers touch it gently, then looked back at Ilya, eyes filled with curiosity. “Is your father-”

“Dead?” he finished and Shane nodded. “Yeah, he died two years after I went back to Russia. He could barely remember his name by then, but I did everything I could and should as a son, even if he didn't care or appreciate it.”

“And your brother? How is he?”

“He only seems to get worse, but I try my best to keep a distance,” he explained. “He has a daughter though, who's the complete opposite of him, very sweet and caring. She's basically the only reason why I still go back to Russia.”

“You go back often?”

“Not really, they are still not very welcoming of people like me.”

“Right,” Shane nodded, moving closer to Ilya, whose body clearly grew tense at the mention of his brother and Russia. “How did you make it all these years? Have you done anything other than music?”

“My father did not care much about me, but I guess you could say he did the bare minimum and made sure that everything he had was divided between me and my brother,” he shrugged and Shane nodded slowly, his finger back to tracing the vein on Ilya's arm. “I sold the apartment I had there and despite what most might expect of a rockstar, I can be responsible when it comes to money.”

“So you're not spending all your money on sports cars, fancy vodka and unnecessary jewelry?” Shane teased, earning a laugh from Ilya.

“Well, I do buy fancy vodka and I have a very expensive vintage guitar at my apartment, but that's about it.”

“An expensive vintage guitar?”

“Yeah, you'll love it,” he winked. “But it's in New York, so you might have to visit me there.”

“Is this your way of inviting me to go to New York to be with you?”

“Maybe.”

“I see,” he nodded, his smile so big it was starting to hurt his cheeks. “Hey, have you-”

“Jesus, Hollander, I told you we should have talked before, didn't I?” Shane rolled his eyes, pinching Ilya's arm. “But no, you were so fucking eager, you could barely-”

“Oh, shut up!”

“No no no, I like when you're like this, I like when you're eager...and horny.”

“Oh, my God, you're still insufferable.”

“Maybe, but you love me.”

“Yes, I do,” Shane responded, his tone serious but still filled with emotion. “Even after all these years, even after you walked away from me.”

“Hey,” Ilya rolled on top of him, his forehead pressed against Shane's, his hands cradling his face. “I'm not leaving, okay? As long as you want me here, I'll be here with you, I don't care what we have to do, we'll make it work.”

“We'll make it work.”



“I can't believe our friend is now dating a rockstar.”

“I can't believe our friend, Shane Hollander, is now dating a rockstar,” Hayden corrected as the three of them made their way to the VIP area of the arena, the lights all pointing to the stage, where Ilya's seven feet tall poster was already down on the back.

The arena was already packed, with music playing over the speakers as people of all ages seemed to mingle around. They stopped by the bar to get some drinks, then headed to their seats, which were exactly in front of the stage. According to Ilya, from then on there would always be three seats reserved for Shane at every single one of his concerts.

“I mean, the guy who barely listens to music is now dating a rockstar, that's absolutely crazy.”

“I listen to music,” Shane said and Hayden chuckled. “I do!”

“You didn't even recognize Ilya's music when you heard it the other day, Shane.”

“It was the Russian version,” Shane quickly protested. “And I hadn't heard that song in nearly nine years, okay?”

“Still, of everyone in our lives, I don't think we could expect *you* to end up dating a rockstar.”

“Considering your dating life was pretty dull, I don't think we were expecting you to date anyone any time soon,” Rose said, shrugging as Shane looked at her with a frown. “C'mon, you know it's true.”

“You two are terrible friends.”

“Hey, we're just messing with you,” Hayden draped his arm around Shane. “And it's important you know that we're actually really happy for you. I don't think I've seen you this relaxed ever since we met, so Ilya is clearly a good influence on you.”

“He has always been,” he smiled, unable to contain the happiness that had consumed him the past two days. Being around Ilya again had flipped a switch on Shane and for the first time in years he felt like he could tap in that boyish side of him, a side that felt more relaxed, more at ease with himself and overall happier.

They had spent most of the last two days together, either inside Ilya's hotel room, at Shane's apartment or at the Voyagers's arena, which Ilya insisted on visiting since he wanted to know more about Shane's job and subsequently make sure every single player there knew Shane now had a boyfriend. Shane had told him many times no one cared, mostly because no player there had ever looked at him that way, but Ilya had not seemed to believe him. In his own words, anyone in their right mind would have the hots for Shane.

Shane had laughed at that, just like he had laughed most of the time he spent with Ilya, because that was what he did. He was Shane's better half and Shane was his; whenever they were together, it didn't matter if the room was crowded or not, they were all that mattered to one another.

“Have you guys discussed how things are gonna go from now on?” Rose asked, sipping on her Moscow Mule. “With all the traveling he must do, things are not gonna be the easiest for you guys, right?”

“We talked briefly about it, but we have decided to just see how it goes and figure out what is best for us as we move along,” he explained. “He is playing in Ottawa on Wednesday and since the Voyagers are also playing there next week, I am going with him and we're gonna spend some time with my parents.”

“Oh, he's meeting the parents then?”

“He already knows my parents, Hayden.”

“Yeah, but they know him as your best friend from childhood, now he's gonna be your boyfriend. That changes things, Shane.”

“I think we'll be okay,” Shane assured him. “We FaceTimed with them yesterday and they were so excited to see him again they barely noticed I was there.”

“Oh, did the only child get jealous that he had to divide his parents' attention?” Rose mocked, just as the lights dimmed and the crowd erupted in screams.

From his spot, Shane watched as Ilya and his band took over the stage. He had his guitar in hand, his curls perfectly styled, black leather pants and sheer black shirt that left very little to the imagination. He looked absolutely incredible and Shane couldn't help the smug smile on his face as he heard all the screaming people calling his man hot. He really was and he was all his now.

“Good night, Montreal. I'm very thankful for all the support you guys have been giving me the past couple nights, so let's make sure this last concert is the best one yet, okay?” He adjusted the microphone, his eyes finding Shane in the front row, his smile growing bigger as Shane gave him a little wave. “We're gonna start tonight with a new song, a song I wrote to someone I'm incredibly happy to be reunited with again, the man who's been my main inspiration for the last ten years and someone I love very much. I hope you all enjoy it, I hope *you* enjoy it.”

Shane could feel his heart pounding inside his chest as Ilya looked directed at him and winked. Almost instantly he could feel eyes on him and people whispering, which he figured was something he would have to get used to moving on. He was dating a rockstar now, they would be seen together, so questions would be asked, curiosity over who he was would grow and thankfully Ilya was still on the rise, so they could learn how to navigate the whole thing together, just like everything else that came along.

“Don't ask me

What you know is true

Don't have to tell you

I love your precious heart...”

Shane could feel his whole body tingling, his smile so big his cheeks were starting to hurt. He could barely describe how happy he was feeling or how much pride he had seeing Ilya up on that stage. They both had achieved exactly what they wanted in their professional lives, now they got to be together and share all the highs -and eventually the lows- with one another, while building something they both could be proud of in their personal lives.

“My God, that man is completely obsessed with you, isn't he?” Rose asked, linking arms with Shane, who could feel his cheek flushing. “And look at you, all flushed and proud.”

“Shut up.”

“I was standing

You were there

Two worlds collided

And they could never ever tear us apart...”



Ilya was sitting in front of the mirror, already showered but still with his shirt off, curly hair perfectly styled as he stared back at his reflection. It had been a great concert to finish off his Montreal run, the arena was packed, everyone was singing along to the songs and according to Svetlana his merch had sold very well too, which was great but not the thing that mattered most to him. Having Shane there, as his boyfriend, watching him perform, getting to hear all the songs he wrote for him, that's what truly made the concert special.

He couldn't wait to have Shane there for more concerts, to be able to sing his new songs to him just like he used to do when they were teenagers. Ilya was excited for this new chapter of his life, one he had been waiting for since he was just sixteen years old and realized his feelings for his best friend were not just a regular friendship. He could be open and proud about his love for Shane now and that alone was enough to make him feel incredibly happy and fulfilled.

“Hey,” the voice echoed in the quiet dressing room and Ilya immediately shifted his gaze, looking at Shane through the reflection in the mirror. He smiled, wide and beaming, then got up to embrace Shane in his arms, nuzzling against his neck as Shane wrapped his arms tightly around his waist. His touch was warm, soft and everything Ilya ever wanted to feel.

“Where are Rose and Hayden?” Ilya asked after pressing a kiss against Shane's neck. “They are going to the bar with us, right?”

“I sent them off earlier.”

“Oh, I see,” Ilya wiggled his eyebrows. “Wanted some time alone with your boyfriend, huh?”

“Maybe,” Shane smiled, his fingers playing with Ilya's curls. “It was a really great concert.”

“You liked it? For real?”

“Of course I did,” Shane smiled, grabbed onto Ilya's chin and pulled him into a soft and quick kiss. “You are a natural, everyone loves you.”

“I only care about one person loving me.”

“Well, that's awkward,” he mocked and Ilya laughed, squeezing his waist and bringing him even closer to him. “Seriously though, you are amazing and I'm really proud of you.”

“Thank you,” he kissed him again, savoring the taste of Shane's lips for a little longer before pulling away. “You know, I have to be honest with you, that song I started the concert with, it isn't actually new.”

“What you mean?”

“I wrote it after I kissed you that night,” Ilya explained, much to Shane's surprise. “I never sang it to you because I thought it would make things even more awkward than they already were, so I kept it on my notebook all these years, no one ever heard it before tonight, which was a bit of a risk but-”

Ilya stopped the minute Shane pulled him closer to him again, kissing him with such an intensity he could feel the air being knocked out of him and his knees wobble a little. He moaned softly against Shane's lips, turned them around and pressed him against the desk, keeping their bodies close as he deepened the kiss.

They stayed there, tangled in each other's body, savoring each other's taste for a moment before slowly pulling away, Ilya's swollen lips turning into a wide grin. He caressed Shane's freckled cheek, planted a kiss on each side and then another one on his nose, making Shane laugh. He could easily spend the rest of his life like that, in Shane's arms, hearing him laugh while he looked at him like he was the most precious thing in the world. Which was ironic, because Ilya was certain that he was looking at him in the exact same way.

“God, you have no idea how much I love you,” Shane said, his voice barely a whisper as he squeezed Ilya's waist. “You have no idea how much I've loved you all these years and how much it killed me that I couldn't do anything about it.”

“That's in the past,” Ilya assured him. “We're here now, together, happy and I am never walking away from you again, okay? I've been in love with you since I was sixteen years old and I will still be in love with you when I'm a hundred and sixteen.”

“Not sure I'll want to date such an old guy.”

“Fuck you, Hollander,” he chuckled as Shane smirked. “I'm trying to be romantic here, okay?”

“You've been writing songs about me for the past ten years, Ilya, I don't think you have to try any harder to be romantic.”

“But maybe I want to.”

“Then I'll let you,” he smiled, kissing Ilya once again. “Now, can you put on a shirt so we can go?”

“What? You don't think I look good enough to go to the bar?”

“You're not going to the bar shirtless, Ilya. Mainly because you are not allowed to and second, I wouldn't let you.”

“Afraid your rockstar boyfriend will attract too much attention, Hollander?”

“I already know you do,” Shane smirked, then sank his teeth into Ilya's neck, biting him. “But don't worry, I'll make sure people know you're taken.”

“Possessive,” Ilya grinned. “I kind of like it.”

Ilya put on his shirt, then slid his arm around Shane's waist, leading him out of the dressing room and down the hall of the arena, which was mostly quiet by then. He pressed a kiss on top of Shane's hair, his smile impossible to contain as they walked together, a whole new life ahead of them.

Chapter 6: The Future

Chapter Notes

And the end is here.

Thank you to everyone who took time to read it, thank you to everyone who took time to kudo and leave a comment, it means a lot and I appreciate all of you.

Hope you enjoy it ☺

Shane's office was quiet as he sat behind the large desk, which had a couple dozen different papers lying around, while on his computer an x-ray was displayed. His eyes rummaged from the computer screen to the paper in his hand, a frown on his face as he realized yet another one of their players was going to be out for a couple of weeks. The Voyagers had had a very complicated season and as they headed closer to the playoffs, a handful of players were starting to feel the weight of it, which meant the team wasn't at its best and Shane had even more work than usual.

He groaned, set the file down on the desk and leaned back against his chair, closing his eyes as he inhaled deeply. He was tired, he missed his boyfriend and he desperately needed a break, something to ease his mind off of all the workload and help him relax. He rubbed his temples as he heard the door opening, sure there was yet more work to come his way when the unmistakable voice filled the room, the accent a welcoming sound that made Shane relax almost immediately.

"Is this Doctor Hollander's office?"

Shane opened his eyes, a smile spreading across his lips as Ilya stood there, arms crossed, blue eyes locked on him and on his lips that unmistakable crooked grin.

"You look like shit."

"Jesus, thank you very much," he scoffed. "You don't see your boyfriend for a whole month and that's the first thing he tells you. Maybe it's time I break up with you."

"You wouldn't dare."

"Try me," he said with a smirk as Ilya walked over to him. He got up, a sigh of contentment escaping him as Ilya's arms wrapped around him, his warmth and the tightness of his embrace making Shane feel reinvigorated almost immediately. "I missed you."

"I missed you too," Ilya whispered and cradled his face, his lips pressing softly against Shane's. "God, I've missed you so much."

“I thought you were only getting here tomorrow?”

“That was the plan, but I managed to cancel some boring ass meetings, so I hopped on the first plane I could.”

“What?” Shane shook his head, his hands gripping onto Ilya's biceps. “Ilya, you can't cancel your plans just to see me.”

“Yes, I can.”

“Your career is important, Ilya. What if those people don't take this well? What if they don't want to work with you anymore?”

“Yes, my career is important, but you are more,” as Shane shook his head, Ilya brought him closer, their foreheads pressed together. “Yes, you are and I've spent way too much time away from you, so whenever I have the chance to be with you, I'll do everything I can to make that happen.”

“I don't want you to jeopardize your career for me.”

“I have my priorities very well defined, Hollander, so you don't have to worry about me, okay? Besides, if these meetings were really important, Svetlana would never have allowed me to cancel them.”

“That's true.”

“We good now?” He raised an eyebrow and Shane nodded slowly, his smile growing once again. “Can I go back to kissing you now?”

“Maybe just a little.”

“Just a little? I haven't seen you in a month, Shane.”

“And if you think we're about to make out in my office in the middle of the afternoon, you're very wrong,” he chuckled, but quickly felt himself go pliant against Ilya's body, a low moan escaping him as Ilya pressed their bodies together, his lips trailing all the way from Shane's ear, to his jaw, then his neck. “Fuck's sake, Ilya, we can't do this here.”

“Says who?”

“Human resources,” Shane said quickly, although it was very clear he had very little intentions of doing anything to actually push Ilya away. He closed his eyes, biting his lip as his body tingled with each kiss Ilya left against his skin.

They had been together for almost six months, but sadly Ilya's schedule didn't make it easy for them to actually be in the same city, let alone the same room that easily. Shane didn't complain though, he loved to know Ilya had achieved his dream, he loved to see the smile on his face whenever he was on stage, so he endured the long days without seeing each other, the video calls late at night and everything that came along with it. Being with Ilya and seeing him happy was enough to make him happy too.

“God, I wish I could take you on the road with me,” Ilya whispered, pecking Shane's lips after each word. “I wish I could have you in my arms every single day.”

“Your tour ends in two months, right?” Ilya nodded and Shane smiled, cradling his face, his thumbs gently stroking his cheeks. “By then the playoffs will be over, we can pack our bags, head to the cottage and just be together until we can't stand one another.”

“That's an impossible task, Hollander,” he smirked. “But I do look forward to a whole summer with you in your cottage.”

“You do?”

“You know how much sex we can have alone in your cottage for the whole summer? We're finally gonna be able to make it up for all the time we lost.”

Shane laughed, his eyes locked on Ilya the entire time, taking in just how beautiful he looked.

“What? Why are you looking at me like this?”

“No reason,” he shook his head. “Just happy to have you here with me.”

Ilya smiled and pulled Shane back into his arms, their lips connecting again in a heated and passionate kiss, a kiss that made it very clear just how much they missed each other, how much they loved each other.

“Sooooo,” Shane licked his lips, his hands cradling Ilya's face. “I'm long overdue for a little break and there's a nice coffee place just around the corner. How about we go there and you tell me how the last few days have been?”

“I'd rather we stay here and make out, to be honest.”

“I'm not making out with you in my office during work hours, Rozanov.”

“You can be so boring, Hollander.”

“You've been saying that for eleven years and yet you're still here.”

“Maybe I like boring,” he shrugged, taking Shane's hand as he led him out of the office.

“Maybe I like Shane Hollander type of boring.”



Ilya stepped inside the cottage with wide eyes and a beaming smile on his lips. It was a beautiful place, the wood made it cozy while the glass walls that surrounded most of the place allowed a perfect view of the lake. It was everything Shane had said he wanted it to be

and now he got to share that with him, which was what truly amazed Ilya. About a year ago, the thought of ever seeing Shane again was nothing but a fantasy -one he barely allowed himself to have-, so the fact he was about to spend his summer with Shane, at his cottage, as his boyfriend was something Ilya cherished more than any other accomplishment he had in his life up until then.

“Can't believe I'm finally at Shane Hollander's cottage,” he grinned, turning to face Shane, who was watching him from the door, hands in his pockets and a tender smile on his lips. “You know, I think we were fifteen the first time you talked about wanting a place like this when you grew up.”

“You still remember that?”

“Yeah, I remember watching you as you talked about this place and thinking how unique you were.”

“Me? Unique?”

“Shane, you were a fifteen year old boy sketching the cottage that you dreamt of living in one day. I don't know about you, but that's pretty unique in my book,” Ilya smirked, taking a step in Shane's direction. “I'm pretty sure that was the day I realized I loved you as more than a friend, you know?”

“You can't be serious.”

“I'm one hundred percent serious,” he closed the gap between them, his arms immediately wrapped around Shane's waist, bringing him closer. “I went back home that night thinking about all the days we would be spending here when we grew up, how much fun we would have together and I guess, somewhere in between all of that, I realized that you were more than just my best friend.”

“Well, it might have taken us a little longer than expected, but we're here,” Shane smiled, gripping onto Ilya's shirt. “You want to start with a tour of the place?”

Ilya gave a quick look around himself, then shook his head and brought Shane's face closer to his, kissing him. He tightened his grip around his waist, their tongues dancing together as low moans escaped them both.

“I have other plans for right now, actually.”

“Are you always this horny?”

“When I'm around you? Yes,” as Shane laughed, Ilya couldn't help his smile. “Also, it's been three fucking weeks, Hollander, don't act like you're not dying to get me into your bedroom.”

“Our bedroom,” he corrected him and Ilya could swear he felt his knees buckle. Being this domestic with Shane, getting to live with him for three whole weeks without anyone or anything to come in between them was everything he had ever dreamt of. Ilya had never felt happier and they had only been there for five minutes.

“Our bedroom,” Ilya repeated before he planted a soft and tender kiss on Shane's lips.
“C'mon then, where is our bedroom?”

Shane pointed in the direction of the main suite and Ilya nodded. He slid his hands down Shane's side and all the way to his ass, lifting him up in his arms with such ease Shane gasped. He grinned, his lips finding solace on Shane's neck as he made his way down the hallway, up the steps and into the bedroom, not even bothering to close the door behind him.

He laid Shane down on the bed, his blue eyes taking in his expression, the way his eyes seemed to glow with excitement, the way his freckles were even more prominent with the flush of his cheeks and his lips, which seemed to beg for his attention even more than usual.

“Ya tebya lyublyu.”

“Ya tebya lyublyu,” Shane said back and Ilya could barely control himself.

He took Shane's lips on his again, kissing him like a starving man while his hands worked on the buttons of his shirt. It didn't take more than five minutes for both of their clothes to be piled up on the bedroom floor, their moans filling up the air as their hands moved across each other's bodies, tugging, squeezing and marking one another.

Ilya loved every second of it, he always did. He loved how eager and desperate Shane got, how his moans sounded like the most beautiful symphony; he loved the way he scratched his back and begged for more, for him to go harder and deeper. He loved how when they were together, it felt like they were only one.

He moved down Shane's body, fingers tracing the feverish skin, lips leaving wet kisses wherever he could reach. As he wrapped his hand around Shane's cock, he made sure to lock eyes with him, a sly smile on his lips as Shane looked back at him with eyes filled with lust, love and devotion. He swirled his tongue around the head once, twice, then slowly took inch after inch inside his mouth, his own body tingling as Shane's moans grew louder and his fingers dug into his hair, helping set the pace.

“Ilya...”



It was a beautiful summer morning. The Sun was high up in the sky, the birds were chirping in the distance and the lake, framed perfectly by the trees, looked like something out of a painting. Leaned against the door that led to the patio, Shane had two mugs of coffee in his hand as he watched, with a beaming smile on his lips, as Ilya sat down in one of the chairs, guitar in hand as he sang what seemed to be a brand new song.

His voice traveled through the air, beautiful, soothing and filled with so much emotion Shane could feel his heartbeat increase with every word. He couldn't remember ever feeling this relaxed and happy in his life, but he knew if he had ever felt anything like that before it was also because of Ilya. He was the only person in his life that could make him feel this way, his presence enough for Shane to feel like he could always be himself, no matter the occasion, no matter who was around.

Life was better with Ilya in it.

As Ilya's voice started to fade, Shane walked over, carefully wrapping his arms around him as he leaned his chin against his shoulder, kissing his cheek and then his neck.

"I don't think this one is about me," he pointed as Ilya chuckled, taking one of the mugs in his hands.

"It's about my mom," he explained and Shane nodded. He took a seat beside Ilya on the chair, their thighs pressed together as Ilya draped an arm around his shoulder, keeping him close. "I had a dream about her last night and when I woke up the lyrics came to me."

"She would be so proud of you, Ilya."

"I like to think so," he smiled, although Shane could tell it wasn't his most honest smile.

Talking about Irina had always been a complicated subject, but Shane felt like he knew enough to know that she loved Ilya immensely and did the best she could to be in his life until she couldn't find the strength to keep going any more. Ilya didn't blame her, Shane knew that much, but he could tell there was some resentment, which Ilya had admitted to working on through therapy. Still, losing a mother at such a young age and being sent off to a whole other country as a consequence of it, Shane knew the whole thing affected Ilya more than he would ever admit...even to himself.

"She would," Shane reassured him, his free hand gently stroking his thigh. "She loved you and she would be so happy to see you happy, to see you living your dream."

"I wish she could have heard at least one of my songs," he admitted, leaning his head against Shane's. "I wish she could have met you."

"I'd have loved to meet her," he smiled. "You think she'd have liked me?"

"Of course she would," Ilya smirked. "Who doesn't like Shane Hollander?"

"I'm pretty sure there must be some people out there."

"Stupid people don't count."

"Ilya-

"I mean it," he quickly said, taking a hold of Shane's chin and making him face him. "Only someone very stupid would ever meet you and not like you. You are the best, most amazing person in the whole world."

“That's a little too much,” he chuckled. “Besides, you're biased.”

“Maybe, but I know people who would agree with me in the blink of an eye.”

“My parents don't count,” Shane laughed as Ilya frowned, then leaned closer, their forehead pressed together and their noses gently brushing against one another. “I'm really happy you're here, you know?”

“I'm happy to be here.”

“And I know we've been here for two days only, but I do hope we get to come back soon.”

“I'll come back whenever you call,” Ilya winked and planted a soft kiss on Shane's lips. “I told you you were my main priority and I meant it, Shane. I don't care what I'm doing, I don't care where I am, you call me and I'll come running. Okay?”

“That's a big promise.”

“Which I'll stick to,” he assured him and Shane nodded. “*Ya tebya lyublyu.*”

“*Ya tebya lyublyu,*” Shane whispered back, earning a wide grin from Ilya. “What?”

“Your Russian is the cutest thing ever.”

“Stop mocking me.”

“I'm not mocking you,” Ilya chuckled, his thumb gently tracing the freckles on Shane's cheeks. “It really is the cutest thing ever, *solnyshko.*”

“Stop it.”

“So cute,” Ilya grinned, taking the mug away from Shane to set it on the small table by their chair. “So, so cute.”

Shane laughed as Ilya swung a leg over his body, straddling him as he nuzzled against his neck. He sighed in contentment, goosebumps all over his body, his heart beating like a drum as he wrapped his arms around Ilya's body, keeping him close. He couldn't think of anything better to do than be in his arms.



Ilya could hear the crowd screaming his name and with each chant his heartbeat seemed to accelerate a little bit, to the point he could swear he could hear it echoing in his ear. He was nervous, excited and a bunch of other emotions all mixed up. It was his biggest concert yet

and it could mean a great shift in his career, which was growing more and more with each passing month.

It wasn't a coincidence -at least not to Ilya- that things got even better for him after Shane walked back into his life, so a part of his nervousness had also to do with the fact he was about to get on stage for his biggest concert and his boyfriend, the best thing that had ever happened to him, wasn't going to be there. Damn Montreal Voyagers's.

“Hey, you okay?”

Ilya turned around at the sound of Svetlana's voice, his shoulders relaxing a little bit at the sight of his best friend, who had a comforting smile on her red lips.

“Yes, I'm okay,” he said, even if he wasn't exactly sure that was true. “A little nervous, but okay.”

“This is your biggest concert, I think it's okay if you're feeling a little weird about it,” she laid her hands on his shoulders, squeezing it gently and they both started to inhale deeply and exhale slowly. “But I know that you're gonna walk up there and give those screaming people the best concert of their lives, because that's how good you are. Okay?”

“You really think so?”

“I know so,” she assured him, squeezing his shoulders a little harder. “Look, this is a very important show and there's people out there that could potentially make your career bigger, people that could grant you access to things we didn't even imagine possible, but none of that matters.”

“What?”

“All that matters is that you are finally happy, Ilya. You're living your dream, your music is on the radio, people already know your name and you have the one person you always wanted by your side. Cherish that, enjoy what you already have and whatever else comes along will be a very welcoming gift to an already perfect life.”

There was a beat of silence and then Ilya nodded, pulling Svetlana to a tight hug. He kissed her cheek, his hands cradling her face as he stared deep into her eyes.

“Thank you so much for everything you did for me all these years,” he smiled. “I'm not sure I'd have survived without you by my side, hearing me complain about my family or how much I missed Shane.”

“Thank God that's in the past now,” she chuckled. “Now I have to hear you talk about how incredible he is.”

“He is quite incredible.”

“Yeah yeah yeah, I know, he's the best person in the whole wide world,” she rolled her eyes, but kept a wide smile on her lips as she leaned her forehead against Ilya's. “I'm happy for

you, for Shane and for everything you two will still get to experience together. But now, we have a concert to do and you gotta leave that crowd begging for more.”

“That won't be a problem.”

“I know it won't,” she winked. “I'll be in the VIP area with a little surprise for you.”

“Surprise?” He asked, but Svetlana was already walking away. He took a look around, giving a quick nod to his band and grabbed his guitar on his way to the stage.

Once the lights turned out completely, he walked up the steps, fixed the strap of his guitar and waited until one single light appeared on the center of the stage to walk in. The crowd went wide, the screams were louder than anything he had heard before and yet, as he walked over to the microphone, he felt himself relaxing. This was what he was best at, this was where he belonged.

He struck the strings, the sound reverberating across the arena. He basked in the feeling for a moment, then the words came out, a wide smile on his lips as everyone started to sing along with him. And then, as the lights started to dance around the crowd, his eyes found Svetlana in the VIP section and his heart nearly came out through his mouth. Standing by her side, wearing one the hockey jerseys of their merch, the one with his name written on the back, was Shane.

He had a beaming smile on his face, proud eyes that not once left Ilya as he sang along. If Ilya had ever felt so happy, he couldn't quite remember, but being on that stage, in fucking New York city, with Shane watching him brought a new sense of pride to himself and he poured his whole heart into every song. For two hours Ilya felt like the king of the world, unable to control his ever growing smile or the sense of accomplishment he was feeling.

Every song seemed to get an even bigger reaction from the crowd, who sang from start to end with the same intensity. At some point, when he started singing the first ever song he made for Shane and the whole arena held up their phones, his eyes filled with tears. Happy tears, proud tears, tears of someone who had finally gotten where he wanted to be.

Svetlana was right, no matter what happened, no matter if or how many doors that concert opened for him, he was already the happiest man in the world.

Once the concert was over and the lights were on, he rushed his way backstage and to his dressing room, where Shane was already waiting for him. He locked the door behind him and immediately made his way over, wrapping his arms around him as tightly as he could.

“I can't believe you're here.”

“You really thought I'd miss your biggest concert?” Shane held his hand in his. “I'm so fucking proud of you, Ilya.”

“Thank you,” he sighed, burying his face in the crook of Shane's neck. “Thank you.”

“Hey,” Shane lifted his head and pushed some of his curls back. “You were absolutely amazing, just like I knew you'd be.”

“I was a bit scared at first, but once I got up there, I just forgot about everything other than just how great it feels to be on a stage. Specially when you are in the crowd watching me with that big ass smile.”

“I wish I could be in every crowd.”

“I know,” he nodded. “Maybe one day you'll be.”

“Like your groupie?” he smirked and Ilya smiled, remembering how he had said that once when they were just teenagers. He brought Shane closer and kissed him. It started out slow and tender, but it quickly grew into a more desperate and needy kiss, their tongues dancing together as Shane's hands slid into Ilya's hair and Ilya gripped tightly onto Shane's waist, keeping their bodies pressed together like magnets.

“You know, it's been almost an exact year since you walked into my dressing room back in Montreal,” Ilya said as they slowly pulled away. “Almost a whole year since you walked back into my life and I couldn't be happier to have you here with me tonight.”

“Back then I wasn't really sure it was a good idea, but I'm really happy I agreed to meeting you backstage,” Shane admitted. “I would never forgive myself if I had lost the opportunity to be with you again.”

“Thank God you did.”

“Thank God I went to your hotel room that night,” Shane smirked, bringing Ilya even closer.

“You have no idea how happy you made me that night,” Ilya smiled, pecking Shane's lips repeatedly. “You have no idea how happy you make me every single day.”

Shane didn't reply, he pulled Ilya back to another kiss, his body melting against Ilya's touch. They were each other's happy place, each other's rock and neither one of them could wait to see what life had in store for them.

“God, I love you so much,” Ilya whispered between pressed lips. “*Ochen' sil'no.*”

“I love you too, my rockstar.”

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